

The Fall of the German Republic

By the same Author

REPUBLICAN GERMANY

with Hugh Quigl

The Fall
of the
German Republic

A Political Study

by

R. T. Clark

London
George Allen & Unwin Ltd
Museum Street

FIRST PUBLISHED 1935

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PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY
UNWIN BROTHERS LTD., WOKING

To
MY WIFE

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PREFACE

THE following pages represent a twelve years' study of German politics, a study which, being progressive, gave me unique opportunities of seeing how often it was possible hopelessly to mistake the significance of events and how often a logically perfect case of political prophecy broke into pieces because men are not ruled by logic, not even by the logic of self-interest. Now that the fall of the German Republic is already an event of the remote past, it is possible to profit by mistakes and seek to relate the events which ended in that fall and to examine their causes, the more easily since the comparative rupture of continuity in 1933 serves, with the comparative rupture of continuity in 1918, to segregate a period and enables the student to survey as a whole what may be called the republican period.

What I have tried to write is a *political study*, that is to say, to narrate the political history of the German Republic, to explain the political causes of its collapse, the political faults of the system, the political errors that were made and, passing in the last instance slightly out of the purely political sphere, explain why they were made. In the discussion of the political problem I have had to allude to the general conflict of ideas and ideals in Republican Germany. In that conflict the intellectual life is a very definite arena and therefore it could not be neglected, but I have limited myself almost wholly to its political, which is not always its most important, aspect. It is in relating intellectual and spiritual movements to political events that one is most likely to go wrong in judgment, to mistake the trivial for the essential, the temporary for the permanent, and yet it is in that conflict that ultimately the full explanation of the fall of the Republic will be found. But it cannot be found yet. Here, despite the positive form of expression, I suggest rather than affirm, for the materials are still inadequate.

On the other hand, except to explain a particular tendency or event, I have neglected the economic side. I did so deliberately. In the first place, as a result of the increase in the number of pro-

fessional economists and the appalling increase in the number of amateur economists—using the term “amateur” in the sense not of “unpaid” but “untrained”—the economic side has already been exhaustively discussed, to my mind with not very much profit to the political student. In the second place, I am glad to have Stresemann on my side in believing that Napoleon’s saying, “Politics is our destiny,” has not yet been refuted, a saying the rejection or misinterpretation of which is responsible for much more of the present intellectual chaos in the domain of politics than those who dislike it would admit. Consequently I have never done more than refer very briefly to the economic background of the political stage; if the reader insists on having the background brought right up to the footlights there is no lack of books in which he will find that feat performed for him. In my opinion, in the evolution of the German Republic, the economic factor, if I may use that phrase, was not a decisive one; if it had been, the history of these fifteen years would have been very different and possibly much more easily understood. The human factor, incalculable alike in its submission to and revolt from the logic of historical development, that logic of which it itself laid the bases, is therefore that on which I have concentrated, and endeavoured, if not to explain, at least to describe, the vagaries of action as men individually and collectively determined their own destiny and were determined by it. If at the end of the narrative the how of the tragedy is reasonably clear, though not the ultimate why, that is because the German tragedy is essentially a human tragedy with logic at enmity with common sense and inevitability at odds with vision. In the end there must be mystery which is no more soluble than any other mystery of human suffering and human failure, because neither its first beginning nor its ultimate end is known.

But on the surface of that mystery there is a collectivity, the political endeavour, and it is that which I have sought to describe, firstly, because it is interesting in itself on purely Terentian grounds and, secondly, because in any political endeavour there are elements which have a distinct bearing on our own individual participation in political life. If history is not a school of politics, then for me at least it has very little meaning.

The materials for the study of the history of the German Republic, partially detailed in the bibliographical note, are at once multitudinous and meagre. There is on nearly every point superabundance of evidence, but on many points there is no means of testing it and it would be foolish to assume that when, for lack of confirmatory evidence, the student has to rely on a single account or several accounts from the same angle, that the narrative constructed therefrom is necessarily an accurate account of what did happen. Anyone who goes into that material with any thoroughness will hardly come to any other conclusion than that the Psalmist may have been hasty but was all too justified in his estimate of human accuracy. In many cases it is possible by comparing, contrasting, and cross-checking to arrive at a narrative on which one would be prepared to stand a severe cross-examination; in just as many it is quite impossible, and one has to fall back upon mere intuition and the knowledge gained from the work done in other cases. It is, I think, correct to say, however, that from study it is possible to gain what may be called an understanding of the evolution and apply that understanding as a measure of credibility in the absence of the recognized tests. But here, however many precautions may be taken, it is fatally easy to go wrong, and so I should be very far from claiming that everywhere I have understood correctly. I have spared no pains in checking fact; I have done my best to apply lessons gained in other fields of historical study in order to understand properly. But I should like to make it clear that I claim for the following narrative no more value than attaches to any individual interpretation of a story that is still incomplete and literally bristles with cruces. If the reader will grant that the attempt at understanding has been, within the limits to which I shall confess, honestly made, I ask no other concession.

I have not written for the student although I should, of course, be immensely gratified if the student found something to interest him in the pages which follow. I have written for the reader who is interested in what was a great drama and would like to have something a little more than merely a sensational account of it. Had I been writing for the student the book would have been

infinitely longer, the evidence would have been in each case critically examined, the pages caused to bristle with footnotes and the covers made to bulge with appendices. Nor would the judgments have been so precise nor the narration so confident. I am very far indeed from having the brave confidence in my own judgment that the style perhaps would imply, or from laying any claim to that omniscience which distinguishes some of my younger colleagues and before which I feel so humble. But I console myself in that humility by gratefully agreeing with a great but forgotten man that "it is better to be ignorant of a few things than to know a lot of things that aren't."

But I will confess to have written from a very definite viewpoint; firstly, that the collapse of the Republic was not at all inevitable except in the sense that, events being causally connected, any event is the result of past events; and secondly, that the fall of the Republic and the consequent establishment in the key-state of Central Europe of a dictatorship, however noble, in place of a democracy, however vile, is an event to be deplored. That is the reason why I have so often gone beyond the functions of an investigator and have passed judgments. Within the limits set to impartiality by an inherited, but, I hope, also reasoned conviction that liberty is the supreme social and political good, I have tried, none the less, to be impartial in those judgments, both of men and events, and I may venture to believe that I have had at least a modified success on the reasonably good ground that those who have been kind enough to read the narrative in whole or in part have violently objected, for one reason or another, to nearly every main judgment in it, and that the chief ground of objection seemed to be what one of them described as "complete instability of political view." I can only conclude that, having satisfied no one, I have attained a certain degree of that impartiality which ought to be one result of intellectual modesty and would refer any other critic who dislikes the judgments, or the presence of judgments, to a famous passage in the first book of Polybius, adding the opinion that if the intelligent study of that historian were made compulsory on all journalists and historians of con-

temporary events, our intellectual withers would be much less frequently wrung.

It remains only to record gratitude to all those who made the sources which have been for long and will, I hope, continue to be for longer, my study; to those old friends and colleagues who have helped me with counsel, argument, and criticism so generously, but whom I do not name lest in any way they be identified with what is a work of many imperfections; to the limitless patience and encouragement of my publisher; and last of all to the father who taught me that the basis of the Covenant is freedom.

R. T. CLARK

August 1934

A NOTE ON SOURCES

THE narrative falls into three parts naturally. The first covers the period from 1919 to 1927 and may be called, with reservations, the consolidation of the Republic. Here the sailing is reasonably plain, and I have taken as basis for the narrative an earlier work to which had been appended an elaborate bibliography.* That narrative has been radically revised. The third covers the period from 1932 to 1933—the murder of the Republic—and is almost equally plain sailing, for here the narrative is above all one of exciting events, and the sources used will be easily identified in the list that follows. The second covers the years 1927 to 1932—the years of decision—years lacking in obvious drama and badly served by commentators. Here the sources are much less easily accessible, and are difficult to detail. None of the sources need especial mention, but I cannot avoid singling out Georg Bernhard's† book, which covers exactly the same ground as that covered in the following pages. I had completed the first draft of my own narrative when it first came into my hands, and it has been much used in the many subsequent re-writings. But while I have in certain cases modified judgments and amplified statements from the additional knowledge he supplies, I felt that, both in conception and treatment, my own narrative differed so much from his that the publication of the latter would not render that of the former superfluous. I have differed from him on many points, but never without diffidence and much searching of sources as well as of heart.

The bibliography is not meant to be exhaustive. I have listed no technically legal or economic books and no literary works, although some of the last especially are of capital importance for the student, but had I done so the list would have been outrageously long.

* *Republican Germany*, by Hugh Quigley and R. T. Clark, London, 1928.

† I have, except on rare occasions, and then for a special reason, everywhere omitted the usual "Mr.," "M.," "Herr," "Dr.," "Graf," etc., not out of dislike of formality, but simply because to have retained these would have added several thousands of words to a narrative already overlong.

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- (b) personal contact with Germans and others associated or acquainted with the political life of Germany;
- (c) memoirs, manifestoes, speeches, programmes, pamphlets, and books (including several unpublished works for the use of which I am very grateful), of which the following is a selection:—

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* Alleged to be based on the papers of a Reichswehr general; of very dubious authenticity.

NOTE.—The bracketed "N.S.," etc., are intended to indicate roughly the political complexion of the writer. Many of the above volumes are anything but fundamental, but they all have their interest; some account of a number of them will be found in my "Survey of Recent Foreign Books" in *The Political Quarterly*. The works are listed as published, *noms-de-guerre* being respected. I have of set purpose listed no books by fellow-countrymen and have omitted as interruptions to serious study the jottings of the peripatetic and the interviewer.

THE FALL OF THE GERMAN REPUBLIC

CHAPTER I

THE "REVOLUTION" AND THE REPUBLIC

"THE trouble with the German Revolution," wrote a distinguished Socialist leader in exile, "was that there was no revolution." This sentence expresses very fairly the verdict which is now almost unanimously being passed on the critical period in German history that begins in August 1918 and ends before Easter 1919. The reasons given naturally vary, principally because they are almost all self-exculpatory, the result of an uneasy consciousness that, when all the facts are fairly examined, no one can but admit that there was at that time somewhere a tremendous opportunity offered to somebody of which nobody took advantage. As the years passed and new problems and new movements succeeded the old, there was increasing dissatisfaction with what had been done in that period; revolution from being a feat that had been accomplished became once again an end to be attained; the new extreme parties, if they were not to stultify themselves, were bound to assert that till their advent there had been and could be no revolution. In Germany, to-day, always and never more so than now the classic land of the official view, the National Socialist view—the official view—is that there was no revolution till Hitler's, while the Communist view—to be described perhaps as the only official opposition view—is that there has been and can be no revolution till the Communist one comes.

The two views have produced two theories of the events of 1918-19. The former represents them as the result of the effort of anti-national and foreign elements which preferred treason to victory, robbed Germany, if not of success in the war, at least of an "honourable" peace, and were finally routed by the national reaction of which Hitler is the incarnation. The latter represents them as the result of cowardly and treacherous sabotage of a

revolutionary movement on the verge of success on the part of those who had been placed where they were in order to lead it when the opportunity came. As under the heavy blasts of unscrupulous propaganda, and thanks to the rapidity with which contemporary history becomes ancient history, the facts were so forgotten that few troubled to correct the perversion of them, the perversion of them appears in all its crudity in the works of quite respectably trained historians. Yet the former is as historically silly as the latter is politically false; the former is based on a deliberate refusal to admit evidence, the latter on the assumption that the production of ideological imagination is the only true raw material for history, and, had it not been for the fact that the perversion has had political consequences, neither would be more than an entertaining subject of investigation for the political psychologist. The result has been that those to whom either extremism was distasteful felt that, as the revolution was producing such obviously wrong effects, what had happened could hardly have been revolution, a conclusion that was consoling politically, and also satisfied that very real sense which is so widespread in Germany of the continuity of German history. The clear fact was that there had been no break with the past; therefore there had been no revolution in the sense that there had been a French revolution or a Russian revolution; if there had been what could be called a revolution, it had been a specifically German type of revolution of the same historical significance as that of 1848. And so the non-extremist historian, convinced that the principle that discretion is the better part of valour having been scrupulously followed by the party leader, might well be followed by the party historian, came ultimately to the stage when he describes the events of 1918-19 as "revolution" without a capital, intending all the emphasis to be put on the quotation marks.

The leading authorities on the subject of revolutionary upheavals recognize three essentials for a revolution—using the word in its historical sense and not in its popular sense of "a Red plot": a revolutionary situation, a revolutionary leadership, and a revolutionary act, a triple necessity admirably illustrated by the Leninist revolution in Russia in 1917, so

admirably indeed that to the very great detriment of the revolutionary cause the brilliant opportunism which took full advantage of special circumstances has been stereotyped into a formula which is at once a recipe for and a test of revolution. The real basis for the denial that there was only a "revolution" in Germany is at bottom nothing more than a gratuitous deduction from the obvious fact that the events of 1918-19 in Germany were not an exact reproduction of the events of 1917 in Russia. It seems incredible that anyone save a hidebound devotee of what he imagines to be Leninist doctrine should ever have imagined that they could be, and yet even after it has become possible to study those events historically a great deal of the criticism of the leading actors, even of Right extremist criticism, is based on the assumption that they ought to have been. That is why it is necessary very briefly to examine the facts.

It seems to be universally admitted that the first essential for revolution was present—a revolutionary situation. In theory a revolutionary situation may be created by a revolutionary movement; one may doubt if there are any historical examples of the successful creation of such a situation, and it is at least certain that there was no such creation in Germany. Actually the creation of the revolutionary situation was so little the act of the revolutionary leadership that it took that leadership completely by surprise.

The creation of a revolutionary situation in 1918—and this is the primary fact with which all the histories of the German Republic should begin—was due primarily and almost entirely to military defeat in the field. The legend of the undefeated, undefeatable army ready to answer any call to sacrifice, which was foully stabbed in the back by the treachery of its fathers and mothers, brothers and sisters, is only the perversion by the malignant of a barrack-room tale, a tale which, starting in the natural indignation of the men in the line, was transformed by German romanticism into the basis of a sort of mystical brotherhood, and is now integral part of the official—though not necessarily sober—version of contemporary German history.

No one would ever seek to belittle the achievement of the

German rank and file and their magnificent fighting retreat, nor try to dim the splendour of the fame of that fighting line which, decimated by enemy-fire and exhaustion, outnumbered, starved, and bereft of hope, conscious only of that unity which is the result of a tremendous sense of isolation, went back bending, but never breaking, from the Marne to the Somme, from the Somme to the Meuse, and would have gone back still unbroken to the Rhine. It was an achievement and a fame of which those who shared in it and their children's children to untold generations may well be proud, but that does not affect the truth that, if its leaders, military and political, had not recognized that they had been outgeneralled, outorganized, and outfought, the retreat would have degenerated into rout, and the men of the line into surviving handfuls of miserable fugitives. The German nation was indeed war-weary—what nation was not? Inside Germany there were forces making for disruption—in what nation were not such forces equally at work? In all the main centres of population there was starvation—but have not starving men lived on just as dead men have won a fight? Weary at heart, physically assailed by privation, and morally assailed by propaganda, the German home front held out until it was clear that every hope of victory in the field had been belied and that the military leaders and the government could promise nothing but utter defeat if the war went on.

It might indeed have been better to have fought on in the perfectly valid belief that the age of miracles is never passed, and with so many examples in history of armies which have refused to admit defeat, snatching victory out of the very jaws of final catastrophe. There were many people in Germany in and out of uniform who were of that opinion—and even on cool reflection they were probably less in the wrong than the other side—but they were in a hopeless minority, and at the very head of the majority were not civilians but the responsible military leaders, the heroes of the nation, who had the final say if they had not the final responsibility, in the decision. No statesman—and the statesman had, of course, under both the Imperial and the constitutional regime the final responsibility—would have

dared to differ publicly from Ludendorff on a technical military point, and still less would he have dared to take the logical consequence of difference, necessary action to make the contrary view effective. The resignation of Ludendorff might be accepted, but for responsible statesmen there could be no possibility of the supersession of the army command.

The reasons for the German defeat are still the subject of controversy, but there is no doubt at all but that Germany was defeated. The armistice of November 11 was a military and not a political surrender; the men who insisted that it should be asked for were not revolutionaries, traitors, and men whose moral and conscience had been sapped by propaganda, but the pick of the military and political talent of the Imperial regime. It was only after the complete acceptance of the military facts of the situation and the request for an armistice that revolution broke out in Germany.

That the best of the fighting men, the junior officers and the rank and file, accepted the inevitable with death in their souls and conscious only of their own matchless endurance sought to throw the blame on anyone but the fighting line is natural. But it is romance not history, and any history that is based on the conception of "the stab in the back" and the assumption that the German army was not fairly and squarely beaten in the field merely intensifies the crush in the overcrowded field of fiction. That is not to say that the army disappointed the hopes of a united nation that was resolved on victory. The nation in the autumn of 1918 was not united as it had been in August 1914; it was not solidly in favour of holding out; it had long ceased to be hopeful of a victory of which four years earlier it had been certain. But in August 1918 there was no revolutionary situation; the situation was not even in any degree threatening until that day of August 8 when the German armies were outmanoeuvred and beaten, when Ludendorff believed he saw the first signs of disintegration in the fighting line and, like the scientific soldier he was, drew the obvious scientific and professional conclusion. Had an armistice of the old-fashioned sort been concluded on August 10 there would, indeed, have been

changes in Germany, but there would have been no revolution; that the First Quartermaster-General, jointly responsible to the nation for the conduct of the war, and practically relieved of responsibility to any authority of state, then and there made up his mind that militarily speaking the game was lost, had nothing whatever to do either with revolutionary propaganda, nor with the failure of the home front, which might well have been excused if it had failed before the nerves of the General Staff.

But the moment it was admitted, though emphatically not till then, that the nation must realize that the army could not give victory and dared not now give even the hope of it, then a revolutionary situation did arise, and recent months had made it abundantly clear that there did exist elements who intended to profit by it. There had always been a revolutionary tradition in Germany, and the largest party in the Imperial parliament was by profession a revolutionary party. In the year 1914 revolution was a word often heard in Germany, but it had nothing about it of the sinister ring which the word acquired after 1917. The Socialist party had evolved in a direction directly contrary to that anticipated by its original founders. Instead of the working classes becoming progressively pauperized and enslaved and the middle class becoming more and more proletarianized, the middle class stoutly refused, even when hardest hit, to become a lower class, and the working man tended steadily to become a respectable bourgeois. Where there were solid masses of workers there was a strong class sentiment, but there was no revolutionary class sentiment; except in special circumstances, the stronger the trade union element becomes the stronger become its conservative tendencies, an evolution that is apt to deceive those who rely solely on literary evidence for social judgments. The aim of the Social Democratic party was indeed revolutionary in the sense that it aimed politically at a radical change in the established order of government, and looked on it as a possibility that, in the event of obtaining a majority, it might have to use force to obtain control of the state. But even that view was not universally held. Nor was it of practical moment when already there was a good deal of conversion to the inevitability of gradualism.

The relations between the state and the party were in theory appalling; in practice excellent. Prosperity had developed patriotism; the German worker did not really feel himself *Vaterlandslos*; the Socialist journalist and the Socialist orator still labelled the King of Prussia or the government, and duly went to a gaol in which he had a restful holiday and from which he emerged a martyr. In 1914 it is possible that the English suffragette had a much livelier consciousness of antagonism to the state than the German Socialist worker. In the years before the war there was infinity of heady talk, but the only true revolutionaries were foreigners, *déclassés* and *illuminés*, who had no influence whatever; there were probably more old-fashioned anarchists than there were true Marxist revolutionaries.

The situation in August 1914 was typical of the strength and weakness of the Social Democratic movement in Germany. During the days of crisis it fulminated against war; it threatened a general strike; it sought to organize international action; its spokesmen talked so loudly that they scared a good many highly placed officers whose capacity for being scared of revolution was unfortunately much higher than their capacity in the field. But no one who was in Germany in those days could have failed to anticipate what did happen. There was one thing the party had always done; it had always voted against the army credits. It could have done so in August 1914, and it would have been little more effective a gesture than when it had done so before. It not only did not dare to do so; it did not want to do so. Even in the secret party meeting before the Reichstag assembled to approve the war there was a three-fourths majority for voting the war credits, and when it came to the actual vote in parliament the Socialist party unanimously associated itself with the war. The only protest made was a negative one; Karl Liebknecht left the House before the vote was taken. This was actually the sole concession—an individual concession—to Socialist revolutionary tradition. The party could indeed have done nothing else. There were certain leaders, as there were certain sections, who felt that somehow a protest ought to have been made if only of the type of Pilate's; it would have been useless. Whatever

the German navy may have done, the party had not trained for "the day"; after fifty years of incessant agitation and steady progress, of fiery speeches and innumerable books, the German worker had become steadily more national. If when "the day" did come, the leaders had been capable of a belated return to revolutionary orthodoxy, even to merely negative protest in the manner of the elder Liebknecht and Bebel in 1870, they would not have been the heroes of a class-conscious mass but merely discredited leaders without a party. They faced a similar situation four years later and, as in 1914, decided that the function of the leader is to follow. The seeds of the tragedy of 1933 had begun to be sown long before the war.

In the days when the German army, 40 per cent of it at least Socialist or from working-class homes, was rushing to its fatal check on the Marne there was no revolutionary spirit left in Germany. There were a few genuine revolutionaries and a sprinkling of anti-war people, those who silently opposed the war because it was a war, and those who remembered the textbooks and opposed it equally silently because it was a capitalist war, and there must have been many in the ranks of the Socialists who, the moment the first shoutings died away, became uneasily conscious that there was something wrong with national and international socialism alike. But everywhere else it was all patriotism. The unity of August 1914 was a sentimental, but it was a very real, unity; all that was needed was to create a solid political basis for it.

This was where the Emperor and his advisers came to the aid of the army command in the creation of a revolutionary situation. The government indeed realized, if the military men did not, that war had changed since 1870 and had become truly a national concern. The actual war was in a very real sense a people's war, but the government did nothing to identify the people with the regime. It went on as if a life-and-death struggle affecting the life and happiness of every individual was merely a little private war of its own.

To the best minds in the governing class in Germany it was apparent that during the month of August the whole situation

had changed. A regime which had stood above the nation and been regarded with hostility by half of it, had been given an unprecedented vote of confidence. If that confidence were not fostered, worse, if it were weakened—and mismanagement, or even what looked like mismanagement, of the war would inevitably weaken it—then the regime was doomed. It would either be overthrown, or have to crush armed rebellion. It was therefore imperative that somehow the people should be associated in the responsibility for the prosecution and conduct of the war in a way in which it had not been responsible for the declaring of it. To these minds it was fairly clear that even if the war ended in complete victory, which in their hearts they did not believe possible—defeatism spread from the seats of the mighty as well as from the hearths of the humble—there would have to be change. There could be no more *faits accomplis* like that of August 1. But the regime was above such elementary political reasoning. It went on presenting *faits accomplis* to the inevitable end of finding not a soul left who would take the responsibility for making any more and disappearing. The failure of the Imperial regime to preserve the sentimental unity by forging even a semblance of political unity was the fault of the regime alone; it had nothing to do with revolution or treachery, or the failure of the national moral; it was just plain political ineptitude, and it was centuries since it had been accepted that political ineptitude on the part of the men in power is a powerful, and may be a decisive, factor in the creation of a revolutionary situation.

It was the first unfortunate circumstance for the regime that the course of the war soon gave the lie to the popular fallacy of a short, hard-fought, but decisively victorious campaign. Ere the first year of it was over the nation could not but realize that the war might be of inestimable length, that it was to be a stern test of moral, physical, and material endurance. There were successes, big successes, but no victory, and no success however big, seemed to bring final victory any nearer. Although the mass of the nation held faith in that final victory for years yet, a reaction from the first sentimental enthusiasm was inevitable; even with

victories the mind of the nation could never unaided have maintained that fierce emotional tension. What was noblest and most abiding of the many factors that went to produce it ought to have been maintained. But from a regime which took passive acquiescence for granted instead of making certain of active co-operation, and which was constitutionally incapable of true delegation, though it could abdicate, no effort at maintenance could be expected. The nation was not distracted by being given responsibility. Thus when its mind was cleansed of the harmless little devils of sentimental patriotism and uncritical enthusiasm the regime made no endeavour to fill the vacuum which was therefore left to be filled by those malevolent fiends, doubt, war-weariness, and defeatism. Inevitably the war ceased to be a people's war; inevitably the nation listened to those who called upon it to make a people's peace.

When doubt began to creep in, not doubt of the rightness of the war, but doubt of the regime's ability to win it, the tiny minority of professional pacifists and revolutionaries had for the first time a suitable atmosphere in which to work, and so to make their contribution towards the creation of a revolutionary situation, for now the more orthodox Marxists were beginning to remember the teachings of their prophets and the more intelligent of the working class were beginning to question the wisdom of their own enthusiasm in the form of questioning the wisdom of the formal working-class leadership. The first public sign of any real element of political discontent was the split in the Socialist party, which ended in the formation (March 1916) of the Independent Socialist party*—an act of doctrinaire courage which has never received that recognition which in the modern world ought to be given to any display of moral resolution. The aims of the new party were at the outset much more pacifist than revolutionary; the genuine revolutionary elements which were positively defeatist formed the Spartacus League and came directly under the influence of the international revolutionary Socialists who, under Lenin's leadership, had held two successful

* It first called itself the "Social Democratic Labour Fellowship," thus staking out a claim to speak for "labour."

conferences in Switzerland. But to one or other group—apart from the genuine pacifists who were valuable but often embarrassing allies—there began to adhere more or less closely all the political individualists of the Left, anarchists, social revolutionaries, and the like, the class-conscious—in the Marxian sense—among the workers, the humanitarians, and the humanists, and in ever-increasing numbers the disillusioned, the discontented, and the desperate. As befitted their names, the Spartacists were the more violent, but the less numerous. The Independents were led by the ablest of the pre-war leaders, and sought on the whole to form a sort of constitutional anti-war opposition in circumstances which really did not allow any such thing to function usefully, while awaiting what they believed would come, the revolutionary moment. They were defeatists in the negative sense that they believed that complete victory was not only impossible, but was undesirable, and so they were positive enough in the sense that they propagandized vigorously against the continuance of the war and "imperialist aims," engaged—a sad precedent but an unavoidable development—in bitter polemic with their late colleagues, now the Majority Socialist party, and got into serious trouble with the government for carrying their propaganda into the front line and into the fleet. The Spartacists simply went one better in every way, because they had gripped the elementary truth that if an anti-war propaganda in war-time does not end in the overthrow of the government it will end in the shooting of the propagandists. They were the first to try to organize strikes, to stir up mutiny, and to commit sabotage, and in general to justify the government in holding them to be public enemies, and so successfully that Karl Liebknecht, who had founded the League with Rosa Luxemburg, a woman of almost heroic stature and one of the ablest as well as the most courageous of the genuine revolutionaries in Europe, found himself in gaol.

But both parties were numerically weak. If the intellectual leaders gradually went over to the rebels, the trade unionists and the vast majority of the party members stayed true to the party leaders, who did not disdain to accept as a compliment the odious

appellation of "social patriots." After the war, when legend making had begun, military writers reproached the government for not having stamped out the nest of vipers before the brood grew up and multiplied. The truth is that almost to the end the military authorities did not really take the movement seriously. If the army command had formally requested action, action would have been taken. When it was taken, as in the first Kiel mutiny the result was so small that both the army command and the government were fully justified in their policy of intervening only in straightforward cases of treason and refusing to make martyrs whose martyrdom might easily shake the loyalty of the still loyal masses. The reproach is unjustifiable; if the army command could refute the statement that Germany could not win the war, defeatism was as dead as a doornail.

But that was just what the army command could not do. Instead of final victory there came what is probably the only great decisive event of those crowded years—the revolutions in Russia. It is the fashion now to say that the Russian revolutions had no influence at all on Germany; the statement is refuted by libraries of evidence. The first revolution (March 1917) transformed the war at last into something that could be accurately described as a struggle between absolutism and democracy—a gain to the Allies that was incalculable in the sphere of propaganda, but a gain which has turned out to be anything but a gain to democracy. It also by removing the Tsar removed the chief reason why the German worker had convinced himself that the war was just and necessary. The second revolution (November 1917) meant that for the first time in this century an anti-war revolutionary class party of the purest Marxist orthodoxy was in control of the state in the classic land of tyrannous autocracy. The moral effect of both can hardly be over-estimated. It was now that German democracy—a tradition and a hope rather than a party—began to bestir itself. As a whole, the democratic elements had cordially supported the war and the government. Apart altogether from the fact that they could not but realize that, after three years of war, the democracy counted for nothing in the calculations of the government, they were now conscious

that Germany was morally isolated. The assertion of the existence of German democracy was necessary if the international position was to be tolerable. In addition to that, doubt was creeping into the minds of the democratic leaders, notably into those of the very shrewd leaders of the Centrum with their close contacts with opinion in other lands. The final result was the famous peace resolution which was carried (July 19, 1917) in the Reichstag on the motion of the Majority Socialists, Progressives, and the Centrum, who in that act formally consecrated a political association that was later on to have decisive effect.

The passing of the resolution ought to have been a claim to power, for those parties had a paper majority in the Reichstag. It never was because the democratic parties were not only ready to maintain the regime if it would only be a little more tender of their susceptibilities, but had no real intention even of accepting power if the government offered it with both hands. Their leaders were unpractised in political realities, and the peace resolution led the German democrats into a cul-de-sac. Not only in Allied countries was it interpreted quite wrongly as a sign of weakness and weariness; it was so interpreted in Germany, where it created a definite opposition between the democratic parties and the regime such as had not existed before, and where it reinforced all the gloom of the pessimists and the courage of those pessimists regarding the war who, in their own new cause of peace by revolution if need be, were becoming optimistic. The political aims of the resolution which proclaimed that the German aim was a peace of understanding, were extremely hazy, and its whole history convinced a number of doubters, and these not all uninfluential doubters, that the cause of peace and the cause of revolution were one. The more dangerous of the two defeatist currents, the negative, was greatly strengthened, and the official parliamentary opposition took fresh courage. From that moment the ranks of the Independents began steadily to fill up.

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the government's embarrassments due to the war-weariness of large sections of the nation with the desire of the intelligent to get successfully out of a war from which apparently nothing was to be gained. But in the masses of the people the question of constitutional reform in Prussia, or a change of chancellors, or the establishment of parliamentary government, aroused little interest and much less enthusiasm. What they wanted was peace; they were not yet prepared in their majority to accept a peace at any price, but they demanded a clear effort towards stopping the war. The effects of the blockade were beginning to be severely felt. By now the nation had begun definitely to be underfed and underclothed; its physical powers of resistance began to be assailed. To those sections of it which felt to the full the effects of war-rationing a purely political struggle was a mockery. A nation which begins to ask why and for what its sons are being slaughtered, while it wonders if to-morrow it will have even less to eat than the day before, needs the steady stimulus either of victory or abiding reason for continuing to suffer. The cry "Bread and peace" is an ominous cry; it had heralded the collapse of Russia; it was beginning now to be raised in Germany. The government could afford neither material nor moral succour, and while it pursued its embarrassed course and the politicians pursued their eternal argument, the outside world in mean streets and middle-class suburbs thought of Russia, which, governed by a dictatorship of the proletariat controlled by a handful of bourgeois, power-greedy revolutionaries, was on the way to obtaining peace. The magic word wiped out all other considerations; it was inevitable that men should begin to envisage not merely seriously but hopefully a similar solution to Germany's problem of stalemate at the front and starvation at home. Russian Bolshevism started its work of debauching Western opinion in circumstances which could hardly have been more favourable; Ludendorff's crude gamble with the forces of disintegration began to have the results a less scientific mind would have foreseen. Russian peace propaganda affected the troops in the East, for the most part inferior troops; Independents and Spartacists adopted Russian slogans and hoped to adopt Russian

tactics; Russian gold and Russian agents were placed at the service of the German revolution which was to be the next stage to the world revolution; the discontent culminated in a strike of the all-important metalworkers under Independent and Spartacist auspices, which might have been decisive but for the efforts of the Majority Socialists and the fact that in the trade unions the revolutionary element was still in a minority. But the portent of the unsuccessful strike was unmistakable; the police began to be very active; the revolutionary situation was approaching.

At the time of the strike, the war had settled down from being a lurid drama of movement to become a tragedy of endurance in mud. Then came the last desperate gamble—desperate and yet necessary more for political than for military reasons—Ludendorff's great spring offensive of March 1918. As the armies moved forward at last to their last campaign, Germany for a brief moment almost recovered that unity which had been steadily disappearing for four years; the roar of the guns that smashed into atoms the enemy front line was a thrilling, irresistible appeal to the nation to make one supreme effort. The appeal could not but find answer; morally and physically the German tightened his belt; even the pangs of hunger and the lure of a Russia that was still hungrier were for a moment forgotten as bulletin after bulletin set the flags of victory flying bravely once again. And victory meant peace, and for peace any sacrifice was worth while. If Ludendorff could have beaten the Allies into negotiation the revolutionary movement would have for all practical purposes become innocuous. But the great offensive worked itself out; the enemy line stiffened; the assailants were held, thrown on the defensive, and then pushed slowly back. The military leadership knew that Germany's effort was exhausted, and told the government so; the political leadership, staggered by the admission that the great gamble had completely failed, could do nothing but wring its hands.

Ludendorff was an intellectual soldier of great gifts, and of so delicately balanced a mental equipment that it was easy for him to suffer from what are called "nervous crises." He had lost

his nerve at Tannenberg, and had to thank an imperturbable unintellectual chief and insubordinate subordinates for victory; he lost it again after the defeat of August 8, and shocked the government by his request that immediate steps should be taken to negotiate an armistice. He recovered much of it later to the disadvantage of Germany, so much as to make one prefer to believe that, even if his nerves were not perfectly under control, his request was due to an absolutely correct interpretation of the military situation such as one would expect from a scientific soldier.

As a military expert, he told the government that the war was lost. The bulwark of the regime and in a real sense the bulwark of Germany, the army in the field, was cracking, and when the noise of the cracking, as sooner or later it must, reached the home front the whole building would collapse. The alternative to a negotiated peace was anarchy. This, if ever, was the moment of the statesman. Whatever view the scientific expert may hold, the leader—to use the new term for the statesman—must believe in miracles, that is to say that, ignorant of what the ultimate end may be, he must believe that the end of his own conception and the ultimate pre-ordained end are identical until history proves them not to be so, and in that belief expect that things will happen which to human reason seem most unlikely to happen. He must go on believing when every rational ground for belief is lost; those who do are the great men of history. The Old Testament is definitely out of fashion in Germany, so that the apologists of the Imperial regime are probably unacquainted with the tale of Hezekiah, king of Judah. Had Hezekiah listened to his Ludendorffs he would, of course, have surrendered Jerusalem at once to the Assyrians, and he would have been justified; being a great statesman he did not, “and, behold, in the morning they were all dead corpses.” The incalculable factor justified faith. A statesman without faith in something is a contradiction in terms; the statesmen of the Imperial regime had not only no faith in their own experts; they had not even faith in their own futile selves.*

* When continued resistance was advocated by Ducrot in 1871, Thiers said: “You speak as a soldier, not as a statesman.” “I speak as a statesman,” replied

Germany was now faced with a supreme crisis, and of such a crisis the solution must be simple. There were really only two courses open to the government. It could either accept its experts' view and sue for peace at once, before all power of resistance was broken, or it could refuse to accept that view and fight on. Both were possible; neither was dishonourable, but either so far as human reasoning went meant the end temporarily of Germany, the only difference being that by the former that end might be less tragic but was certain, by the latter it might be more tragic but was uncertain. The ultimate judgment of history may very possibly be that the only indication of any real statesmanship on the part of the ruling classes was the much-maligned Wilhelm II's desperate original resolve to die at the head of a last assault. But whatever the decision, ordinary common sense indicated that what was absolutely essential was speed and resolution. If the former course were adopted, negotiations must be begun at once; if the latter, the army command must be changed at once, a great appeal made to the nation, and drastic action taken against anything that was calculated to lame the last effort. The measure of Imperial statesmanship was that in an ultimate crisis it was capable neither of speed nor resolution, nor of action of any kind. It devised a method of solution almost unique in German history; it abdicated, an abdication which was worse than either a crime or a blunder; it was a classic exhibition of shameless poltroonery. The excuse that by abdication they hoped by deluding the Allies into mistaking abdication for revolution to make the terms of inevitable surrender less harsh than they might otherwise be only makes matters worse; it does not make shameless poltroonery any less shameless to make it stupid as well.

Very little else could have been expected from them. The last Imperial government was one of officials and favourites, able men in their way, and in administration backed by an incomparable civil service; it possessed no statesman except its chief, who was

Ducrot. "A great nation . . . always recovers from its material ruin, but never from moral ruin. This generation will suffer, but the next will benefit by the honour which we shall have saved."

approaching the final stage of arteriosclerosis. For months it had been consistently abdicating in favour of anybody and everybody, yet never definitely ridding itself of constitutional responsibility. When the supreme crisis came the one fact that was fully appreciated was that not only the Allies but the nation with which they had failed to identify themselves would hold them responsible. Helped to their decision by the ever louder growling of the monster of revolution as he strained at the chain that still held, they abdicated in favour of the men of their despite—the parties of the peace resolution, and so by abdication took the decision to surrender.

One must insist on the fact of abdication *ad nauseam*. The victory of German democracy, the victory to which, according to one set of political students, contemporary German history had been steadily moving, was not won by the democracy. Power was placed in its hands because power was an embarrassment to those who had held it so long. It is that fact that alone can make comprehensible from the point of view of sane statesmanship why the Allies failed completely to realize the German expectations and treat the democracy more lightly than it had proposed to treat the autocracy. Any realist student of the situation might have been pardoned for thinking that the establishment of the parliamentary regime was a mere soldier's trick of camouflage, a military measure, and that, if the trick succeeded, the camouflage would be dropped and the autocracy restored. Actually that was in the minds of many upholders of the regime, though not in that of the government, as subsequent events were to prove.

Although much of the personnel of the old regime remained to serve the new, the old regime definitely abdicated. The Emperor summoned the parliamentary majority to power; the doctrine of ministerial responsibility to Parliament was accepted; the vague promises of constitutional reform became in some cases reality, in others definite pledges; a parliamentary cabinet was formed in which Socialists held high office. As if by magic the whole apparatus and paraphernalia of government adapted itself to the new conditions; the cabinet asked for an armistice

in the name of the German people, while the army command, having dropped Ludendorff, for the first time neglected everything else for the supreme duty of striving to avoid capitulation in the field.

The new regime began its brief career under two handicaps. Its members honestly felt that a real change had taken place, and that the extent of the change would be everywhere appreciated. The thought was present in their minds that the Allies would revise their war-aims. It is as idle to deny this as it is stupid to say this thought was not legitimately and honourably present. But that it was present does more credit to the hearts of the democratic statesmen than to their heads. It is true that the Allies on the confession of their most representative leaders were in the field against militarism and despotism to make the world safe for democracy, though that did not necessarily mean that they would treat a German democracy other than as a conquered enemy, even if they believed that it was a genuine democracy intended to last and capable of lasting. But the war was much more than a conflict over a principle of government; it was in essence a war of peoples for mastery, a conflict of historic, political, and economic ambitions to which a negotiated peace was an impossible end. Unless it was a peace of sheer exhaustion it was bound to be a Carthaginian peace. There was no real evidence—and with their own record in the matter of Carthaginian peaces actual and advocated behind them no realist German statesman but should have seen that there was none—to show that the Allied peoples were prepared to hold round-table talks with the enemy on the democratization of Europe; there was every evidence that they were prepared to fight to a finish with the German nation. There is a clear case against the Versailles settlement on many grounds, but not on the ground that it was a dishonourable denial of previous promises.

To the illusion regarding Allied intentions the new regime added an illusion regarding the state of mind in Germany. To the masses parliamentary democracy meant very little. In September and October the revolutionary fervour had reached almost fever pitch. As the military situation went from bad to worse so rapidly

that it was impossible to conceal the truth, the power of moral resistance to despair disintegrated at an alarming and increasing pace. It was admitted that, if an armistice were delayed much longer, there would be no alternative but surrender in the field. The west still held out, but there were now open, unfillable breaches in the south and the south-east, and almost chaos in the east. The fighting line, thin to the point of emaciation, maintained the terrible moral of utter despair; it had come to the point where all that remained for it was to die where it stood. But behind the fighting line the great army was melting away. Discipline had gone, and orders were no longer obeyed. The revolutionaries, backed by an ever-increasing force of popular despair, grew ever bolder, and under that impetus the revolutionary leadership consolidated. To it the parliamentary regime was not the end of the struggle, but the beginning of the end. The autocracy had gone; Germany had entered what was called in the jargon of the day "the Kerensky period"; a little longer and it too would yield inevitably to the Socialist revolution. Then, without any particular warning, revolution was upon the nation.

There was a mutiny in the fleet; the mutiny was incompetently handled by the high command; the mutineers became first heroes, and then agents of the revolutionary party. Like a forest-fire the infection spread. Except in the line the army collapsed; thanks to the long propaganda of the Independents and the Spartacists the movement everywhere adopted Russian forms; everywhere there sprang up self-constituted workers' and soldiers' councils; nowhere was there any resistance. Then on November 7 there came the revolutionary act. In Munich the Independent Socialist, Kurt Eisner, a Jewish journalist, a revolutionary of the old-fashioned idealist school, no Lenin indeed, but a man of singularly simple and attractive personality, proclaimed the Republic in the Bavarian capital and found not a single soul to resist him. This is the decisive act of the German revolution, not the Kiel mutiny. By it an entirely new situation faced the regime.

Up to then the parliamentary cabinet, busied with the notes and counternotes of the armistice negotiations, had believed

that it could ride the storm. Even its Majority Socialist members were convinced that a parliamentary regime could be maintained; they insisted only on the abdication of the Emperor to give them freedom of action. But Eisner's proclamation of the Republic of Bavaria forced their hand. This was not evolution but revolution, revolution depending on force, and the disruption of the Reich for Eisner had proclaimed Bavaria a free state. Similar proclamations were made in other states and all over Germany those in authority hastened to submit to the new councils. On November 9 the revolution reached Army headquarters and the capital. At the former it had been decided that no attempt could be made to suppress the movement by force; it must be acquiesced in unless orders came from a properly constituted political authority; the Emperor showed his appreciation of the significance of this abdication, though it was not so much abdication as a comfortable recourse to the old conception that a soldier's duty is to obey, by contributing an ostentatious and very prudent abdication of his own and fleeing to Holland. In the latter, with the streets full of fraternizing soldiers and workmen, all with arms, and with the confession of the military authorities that they had no troops on which they could rely, the parliamentary cabinet took the same course. In indecent haste it made over its power to the Majority Socialists.

Between November 7 and November 9 the position of the Majority Socialists had become impossible. By the 9th they had virtually been left without a party, and by all the rules of the revolutionary game had ceased to count. It had taken the Russians eight months to transform the "February" into the "October" revolution; a similar transformation, men said, would take the German proletariat only as many days. That was the temper of the only section of the nation that had the heart to make a decision; that was the temper of its leaders on the day before the revolution swept into Berlin. There is not the slightest doubt that on that day Germany was within a hairbreadth of seeing the attempt at the establishment of a proletarian dictatorship strongly made. But it never was made. For all their long agitation the revolutionary leaders were taken by surprise at the complete-

ness of their victory. They were prepared for an insurrection, even for fighting; they were not prepared to take over lock, stock, and barrel a nation which clamoured for them to take it over, and whose nominal leaders had simply abdicated. They hesitated, sought to make the preparations that should have been made long before; with all his courage Liebknecht was less a revolutionary than the veteran Eisner. Had Rosa Luxemburg been a man, the night of November 8 would have seen a soviet ruling in Berlin.

In that little hour when the scales were still swaying the Majority leaders took their decision. They were not revolutionaries any of them, but solid honest bourgeois for all their working-class origin. They were men of property, and the servants of great organizations possessed of property. They were patriots and Germans first, and Socialists second. To them a Leninist regime as in Russia was not merely undesirable, but impossible for Germany. They were men of the west, men who had been in opposition not to western civilization, but merely to a form of government which was not specifically western as Leninism was specifically eastern. They were not heaven-sent statesmen, but politicians who had acquired a solid political experience and knowledge of men. They realized the fact that the parliamentary cabinet was doomed; it was loved by none, and would be defended by none. In the nation there were only those who had tolerated it and those who sought to reverse it. They also realized that among the latter stood for the moment the vast majority of their own party under old colleagues whose qualities and aims they knew well. They did not underestimate the forces behind the revolution, but they were convinced that these forces were more apparent than real, that the German worker was not fundamentally a revolutionist, that a German "October" revolution would mean bloody civil war, and still bloodier reaction which would establish the reign of force in a more extreme form than ever before, and that it would be a reaction that would be backed by the majority of the nation. They knew that the real revolutionaries were still a feeble minority, and they knew the measure of the revolutionary fervour of the leaders. Of them all,

only Liebknecht a visionary and Rosa Luxemburg a woman were dangerous.

They had two courses—either to join in the orgy of abdication and let events take their course, or join the revolution and destroy its menace by leading it. They took the latter. On the anti-revolutionary side no one made any difficulties; the cabinet was only too glad to be relieved of responsibility, particularly on the terms offered. To their leader, Friedrich Ebert, the last Imperial Chancellor of the Hohenzollern said: "I commend the German Reich to your loving care," and Ebert replied: "For that Reich I have lost two sons."

In the evening it was announced to the nation that Socialist unity had been achieved, and that a Council of People's Commissaries ruled Germany. Greatly to Ebert's annoyance, Phillip Scheidemann, his most intimate associate, had been carried away by the popular enthusiasm, and had settled one burning question out of hand by proclaiming the German Republic. Ebert had felt that even that step the Council had no right to take; it ought to have been left to a properly constituted authority and not been taken by a revolutionary junta.

It is important to realize the full implications of Ebert's policy. The assumption of power in such circumstances was an act of courage and patriotism which only the Bolshevik has any right to censure. There is no justification of any kind for the cowardly and mendacious attacks now delivered upon it by the very men who more than probably owe their present continuance in life to it. He seized power to save Germany, not to save the revolution; the gratitude of the saved country—and there was no one else in it who had either the courage or the power to save it—is a sad commentary on the malevolent ignorance of the present self-constituted leaders of Germany. Having assumed power, he consolidated it by inviting the co-operation of the Independents, an act that looked much more magnanimous than it was, for if that co-operation was not secured Ebert and his colleagues could have done no more than join the rest of the abdicators. But he made the conditions of co-operation clear on one point. There was to be no Leninist dictatorship; there was to be a

democratic republic with a constituent assembly, and not a party central committee. For a moment decision hung in the balance. The Independents and the Spartacists had worked in very close relations in the past weeks; they had all gone to school to the Russians, and were in close touch with the Bolshevik rulers. But among them there were very many—so difficult is it, *pace* Herr Hitler, for men to turn oriental overnight—who had considerable doubts as to the wisdom of transplanting the Russian system on to German soil. To many of them the full gospel of Lenin was not one for a free people, a civilized people; it could not be that Germany needed a ferocious and tyrannical dictatorship before her people could be educated up to a Socialist republic. It was the Socialist republic that was their aim. They had none of Lenin's bitter individualism and contempt for the masses, and none of Hitler's. They wanted a Utopia not a blood-bath, and in the offer they saw the means of uniting a great movement and establishing the Socialist republic firmly on the basis of a Socialist majority. Like Ebert, they reasoned that in a civilized nation there could never be permanent acquiescence in a proletarian dictatorship, and that a proletarian dictatorship in Germany would encounter forces which were not present in Russia. It was possible to exterminate the bourgeois and hold down the peasant in a land of wide spaces like Russia; it would never be possible to hold down even the working man in a highly-industrialized country like Germany. But there might be a dictatorship of the masses in Germany, if there could never be a dictatorship over the masses, and, if the government were a majority one, dictatorship was a misnomer. They set German realities higher than Russian fantasies, and so they consented.

The new Council of Commissaries—it was natural that Leninist-, or rather Trotskyist-nomenclature should be used to mark that there had been a revolution—was however founded on mutual misconceptions and ended in mutual mistrust. From the point of view of the doctrinaire Communist, both Majority and Independent leaders were traitors to the Leninist revolution. That is perfectly true, and neither, one fancies, would offer any defence save that one cannot be a traitor to that to which one

has never taken oath. Lenin is a unique phenomenon; he has never had a peer; he most certainly had none in Germany. But there *is* such a thing as the Socialist revolution. To that both parties had taken oath, and to that the Majority men were certainly traitors. The whole history of party politics in Germany is incomprehensible unless it is recognized that that treachery is a fact. Ebert never intended more than a parliamentary democracy on western lines, in which the Socialists might have a majority if they could. The Independents did want a Socialist republic, and were prepared to depart from severely democratic practice to get it. They accepted the idea of a constituent assembly, but they conceived it as the completion of a period of Socialist rule during which the government ought to base itself on the workers' and soldiers' councils. While it was Ebert's intention to resist any attempt to impose a form of government more to the Left than a democratic parliamentaryism, the Independents hoped that, if the pledge to hold a constituent assembly had to be redeemed, their work would have been so successful that it would be a Socialist assembly.

Thus neither side was sincere save in that it had each definitely set its face against a Leninist revolution. On the insistence of the Independents an effort was made to attain complete unity, but in vain. The Spartacists refused to compromise, and kept the Red flag of Bolshevik revolution flying. The whole decision took place amid scenes of confusion, if not actually of anarchy, and in a sad hurry, and its motives were nearly as confused. They were the result far more of instinct and prejudices than of sober political reflection, forced on their makers by the past and the present rather than by the present and the future. In the long run, what finally decided the issue was something elementary and unanalysable, something that went very deep into the roots of emotional being. The Majority leaders had long since burned their doctrinal boats and become merely German labour leaders with political ambitions; the Independents had a greater intellectual and moral ordeal to undergo before they could bring themselves to the point of forsaking the dream for the business. But in the long run these men to whom the name

of citizen had been contemptuously denied by the old regime remembered nothing but the fact that they were citizens, that they were less the prophets of the new than the heirs of the old, that they were part of a long history, and that just outside the frontier the last flower of German manhood was desperately closing its thinning ranks in a final effort at conservation. No German could have gone on to betray that for which in that last agony the front line stood. So historic, so dramatic was the hour that even Liebknecht toyed for a moment with the idea of national unity and a national effort; so great in civilized men is the power of history.

For good and for ill the decision was taken. There had been a German revolution; it had lasted exactly two days.

CHAPTER II

THE REPUBLIC AND THE PARTIES

IN the forenoon of November 11 the armistice came into force. The real purpose of the German revolution had been achieved, and with the stopping of hostilities the mercury in the revolutionary thermometer ran backward to the bulb. It was this that rendered the task of Ebert and his immediate associates relatively easy. The revolutionary act had taken place only to be promptly nullified; the revolutionary movement still existed but was shorn of half its force; the revolutionary situation could be changed. The task of Ebert was to secure a rapid return to normality and to liquidate the revolution.

In the two days that the revolution lasted, the new government had created a very favourable impression by the simple method of confining its public action to speeches and manifestoes. Its formation had united the Socialist rank and file, who were ignorant of the circumstances of its formation. To these it seemed that if the Independents had ceased to be as Bolshevik as they had been, the Majority men were resuming the road traditionally marked out to a German Socialist party. They were leaving the wilderness of social patriotism in which they had lingered almost overlong for the straight path to the promised Marxist land. Their change of front—and there undoubtedly was a contrast between the speeches of November 1918 and the speeches of, say, November 1916—impressed the whole revolutionary movement, even impressed the extremists, except the few who, in so far as individuals could, had made the revolution, and not even these knew that in the hour of decision Ebert had made a bargain behind the backs of his Independent colleagues with the army command.

It was only afterwards that the details of the bargain became known and the real rôle of Ebert as the saboteur-in-chief of revolution was understood. The army was the key to the situation. It was not, as in the Russian November revolution, in full dissolution. On the contrary, despite the chaos in the rear and the

formation of soldiers' councils even at Imperial headquarters, there was a solid, well-disciplined coherent force, well armed and well officered, which could very easily dispose of armed resistance if, indeed, it could not do much else. That army was now coming home. To the extremists it was the main danger, for it represented precisely that power which Kerensky had lacked. Had the Majority leaders been for a moment sincere in their desire even for something so comparatively modest as a Socialist revolution, their obvious course was to have closed the Socialist ranks and flung on the army the onus of creating civil war. Instead, Ebert made his bargain. If Hindenburg and the officers' corps stayed at their posts during the demobilization period—the danger period—and supported him and his colleagues in the maintenance of order, they on their side would deal firmly with Bolshevism.

While almost unbelievably the nation realized that the dawn of peace had really replaced the nightmare of war, Ebert had already settled the fate of Germany. No use was to be made of the revolutionary situation; instead, the surviving forces of the old regime were to be used against the revolution. In the succeeding days Germany presented a curious spectacle. The blockade still was maintained, the moral isolation continued, but the nation went about its own business. The chaos that was visible was more apparent than real. While three-quarters of the army was quietly demobilizing itself, while excited crowds still thronged the streets, while in every big town soldiers, sailors, and civilians went about armed, normal life was being resumed. The frontiers saw the chaos at its worst. In the west allied armies of occupation were following hard on the heels of the retreating Germans; a considerable portion of German territory was to be separated for years from the Reich. In the east new enemies, the Poles, having started a national revolution on German territory, were in actual conflict with German troops for the possession of what was still legally German territory and behind the Poles was the sinister menace of a great revolutionary wave flooding silently in the track of the retiring German Army of the east. Inside Germany the old regime down to Hohenzollern eagles and officers' epaulettes vanished overnight. Kings and princes had abdicated, Imperial statesmen

and politicians vanished into retirement, generals had absconded, but German officialdom remained. While, on the face of it, authority was exercised by a multitude of local self-appointed councils, committees, and governments, all of them nominally Socialist and composed of Socialists of every type, from stout revolutionaries through trade union leaders to youths who called themselves Socialists simply because then it was impossible to think of calling themselves anything else, the administration was carried on by the same people in the same way as before. There were interruptions here and there in time and space, but, on the whole, official Germany—the most lasting creation of old Prussia—from Foreign Office secretary of state to humble country postman, in its vast majority carried on. Where further leadership was needed, ordinary men, in the absence of kings and statesmen, found the courage which crisis lends the inexperienced to supply it.

Much was later made of the terrible impression caused by the armistice terms, but in those days there were unexpectedly few who mingled their tears with Hitler's.* The terms were harsh, but they were armistice terms not peace terms, military not political. The negotiators, in seeking to have them modified, invoked not justice but mercy; there was indignation in Germany certainly, but the loudest indignation came to their credit from those allied observers who arrived in Germany to witness the appalling straits to which women and children had been reduced. The nation itself had no time to reflect on the melancholy conclusion to the great adventure nor on its own sufferings. Realization came later, but for the moment Germany was too busy with the future. Half starved and mentally, physically, and morally exhausted it felt instinctively that it had touched bottom in the abyss of misery and in that confidence slowly recovered its poise as it came to the sudden realization that, for the first time in its history, it was legally master of its own destiny. Things, therefore, seemed almost bound to be better if only because it did not seem possible that they could be worse. In spite of four years' suffering, in spite of humiliation, in spite of menace of the future, the country was almost good humoured.

* See *Mein Kampf*, p. 223.

This was what saved the Ebert government in what was from the political point of view a very critical period. The Spartacists had rejected the Socialist Council of Commissaries and were preparing action against it; the Independents were pressing for a much wider Socialist programme than their colleagues were willing to risk, and were in close touch with the Spartacists, regarding themselves as leaders of the revolution in a sense which Ebert could not and would not claim to be; it would take some time before the army command could keep its pledge and place reliable troops at the service of the Majority leaders. Even if the government could, as it did, leave details to officialdom, the mere problem of existing without support in what appeared to be to the cold political eye a rapidly dissolving Reich was frightening in its complexity. Without that good humour, that atmosphere of confident expectancy, every single citizen, and not merely selected bodies of them, would have been a potential and at any moment an actual enemy. Into the elements of that complexity there is no space to go; the narrative must confine itself to what was decisive for later history, the break up of the Socialist coalition.

The miserable inheritance of the spirit of abdication weighed heavily on the Ebert wing of the coalition. To the bolder and more doctrinaire wing, its policy seemed to be little more than to be one of getting rid of the burden of responsibility by giving the nation the first opportunity it could to get the government it wanted. Ebert's policy was indeed to push on the elections to a Constituent Assembly as rapidly as possible, but there was more in that policy than mere abdicationism. The mild disorders of the November days coming on top of the long extremist agitation both frightened and disgusted men who were ostensibly and even by profession revolutionary leaders. To Ebert revolution had become not merely undesirable but something to be avoided at all costs. In that view he was undoubtedly supported by the great mass of the nation. Over against the tiny minority who desired to copy Russia there was that solid mass over whom the thought of the possibility of Bolshevism hung like the spectre of a fury from the pit. The fear of Bolshevism was not an artificial fear simulated for political ends; it was very genuine despite what

those who did not share it may say. If there is one thing certain to-day it is that the Bolshevist menace was never really serious after November 11. What seriousness there was in it thereafter was created by the tactics of the government. But at the time, with the horror in Russia before their eyes and the close pursuit of the German Army of the east by the Red Guards, it is not surprising perhaps that there were so many who both believed in and feared as immediate the threat to western civilization which the Moscow version of revolution constituted.

To the Independents the thought of becoming a dependency, political or intellectual, of Russia was equally abhorrent, but they had made up their minds that a return to the old regime or even the advance to a democratic constitutionalism was nearly as bad. They wanted a German Socialist state, and in the circumstances they were at once more honest and more clear-sighted than their colleagues. But they had not realized so well as they the temper of the country which after the war-years was not disposed to draw subtle distinctions between a Leninist and a Socialist revolution and would have so fought a Socialist revolution that there would have been no other course for the Independents but either to give way or to adopt Bolshevik methods of dictatorship. At the moment, however, they conceived that they could still found a Socialist republic by democratic methods. The first trial of strength took place on a more or less academic point and the result showed that there are no such things as academic points in a revolutionary situation.

The Council of Commissaries was a revolutionary organization in the sense that it had no legal basis of power. Ostensibly it was based on the workers' and soldiers' councils; actually it was entirely in the air. The Independents now sought to legalize the situation by inducing the government to declare the councils to be that necessary basis. The tacit reliance on the councils was a concession to the Independents and to Leninism, but it was perfectly meaningless because of the variety of character and composition of the councils. Under some of the more extreme leaders they had proceeded to create some sort of connecting organization by the establishment after the Russian model of a Central Congress

of Workers' and Soldiers' Councils. As the days passed and the government did nothing whatever to establish the Socialist state except by the issue of platonic decrees, the power of the extremists began to increase. The Liebknecht-Luxemburg faction began to attract very much more support among the workers from whom Ebert was now almost completely divorced, but whom the Independents regarded as their special flock. Inside the government the controversy became acute. The Independents embarked on a policy of pure obstructionism and were outmanoeuvred. They forced an appeal to the Central Congress and sought to obtain a declaration that from this body the Government derived its power in a revolutionary sense, without any nonsense about its being a transitional body to which the last Imperial government had legally transferred its power. Their tactics were so bad that although they scored the debating point, the special committee elected to function as representing the source of governmental power was composed entirely of Majority Socialists and became a definitely anti-revolutionary body. The election showed the Spartacists that, so far as working through the councils was concerned, they had lost the game. They broke out into open insurrection in Berlin, relying on a small but well-organized revolutionary force and supported by many of the Berlin workers. By this time, thanks to the measures taken by the army command, regular disciplined troops were arriving in Berlin. Despite a certain dubiety about the propriety of employing them, which was expressed even by some of the Majority leaders, they obtained *carte blanche* from Ebert and after some bitter street fighting put down the rising, the backbone of which had been "the flower of the Revolution," ex-sailors of the Imperial Fleet. There was much unnecessary severity and the Independents went out of the government. With unwonted cleverness Ebert left it to the Congress of Councils, which had already endorsed the government's decision to hold the elections to a Constituent Assembly in January, to fill the vacancies. It chose three Majority men.

The revolution was now definitely liquidated. A bourgeois government was in power and the revolutionary elements driven into the street, where they were quite unable to hold out against

the regular and irregular forces the government could concentrate against them. In an endeavour to recover lost ground the Independents combined with the Spartacists to declare a general revolutionary strike. The response was excellent and once again insurrection raised its head, only to be once again bloodily crushed by the government troops who took measures into their own hands and distinguished themselves by the brutal and cowardly murder of Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, a murder which to their eternal shame the government condoned. The result of the brutality was not immediately apparent. It is significant of the general temper of the nation that it provoked no outburst of popular fury, but it was to have bitter results in the future. Without the eternal cry of the blood of the martyrs for vengeance, the eternal call to remember the German St. Bartholomew, the wrecking tactics of the Third International would have had no real success. With it there has not been from that day to this a united Socialist party in Germany.

That is the true charge that can be laid against Ebert and his immediate associates. It is no real defence that they acted from patriotic motives and out of honest conviction. The mere fact that an action is honest does not exempt the actor from the charge of honest stupidity. Honesty is an invaluable quality but its exercise should not necessarily exclude intelligence. What ought to have been obvious to Ebert and his associates, even if they had ceased to be Socialists, even if they had been so honest as to admit that they had ceased to be such, was that without a strong Socialist party there could not be a democratic Germany. The risk they took was that of re-establishing the old regime by preventing the Socialist state from being established; the risk they ought to have taken was precisely the reverse. One can acquit them of sordid motives though one need not deny that there was present the element of personal ambition; one can even pay tribute to their German patriotism, but they need not have identified that patriotism so exclusively with an attitude of diffident negation towards their whole political past. The conflict between that past and their present they never resolved; in the end they not only crippled the Socialist movement which was the best basis on which

to build a democratic Germany, but they crippled that democratic Germany from the start. If the first actor in the tragedy of the German Republic was the old regime, the second was the first revolutionary government and the reason was the same inherent repugnance to positive action and to the possession of a positive policy.

The momentary result of the severity was good. It was approved by the nation and it created confidence in the firmness of the government; it is one of the tragedies of modern governments that they can only be firm against an extreme Left minority. But that was what the nation wanted at the moment, and the result of the election on January 19 was a striking endorsement of Ebert's action by the Left. The Majority Socialists polled no less than 37·9 per cent of the total poll while the Independents polled only 7·6 per cent. The result was also a striking victory for bourgeois democracy. The old democratic coalition of war days, Majority Socialists, Progressives, now the Democrats, and the Centrum polled the astonishing total of 76·1 per cent while all the parties of the Right, the depressed supporters of the old regime, polled only 10·3 per cent. But from the point of view of the men who had conducted the long agitation against autocracy it was a bitter tragedy. In the Assembly the two Socialist parties came within thirty-six seats of an absolute majority. A united party would almost certainly have got one. A Socialist state would have been democratically established, a state on which no suspicion of counter-revolution could have rested. The fruits of the revolution would not, as Eisner—now lying in a lonely neglected grave the victim of counter-revolutionary assassination—had said sadly, have been allowed to slip away and some of the worst complications with the victorious enemy powers might well have been avoided. A Socialist state would have been a guarantee against Junkerdom; of a bourgeois democratic state, remembering the democratic attitude of complete servility in the old days, the French observer had some reason to report to his government on the new government—the more things change in Germany the more they are the same.

The Council of Commissaries lost no time at all in getting rid

of responsibility. The first task of the Assembly was to elect a president; it elected Ebert; there could have been no other choice. It may be taken either as a compliment or the reverse according to one's political state of mind that there was no other man in Germany more thoroughly deserving of the honour. Ebert at once entrusted Scheidemann with the formation of a government. It was completed very quickly, a coalition of Majority Socialists, Centrum, and Democrats, with a majority of ninety-five in a house of four hundred and twenty-one members.

The whole episode was, in fact, astonishing evidence of the rally to the democratic coalition and the paucity of support which either revolution or reaction enjoyed in Germany. It did, from the national point of view, justify the "men of November," now known as "the November traitors," and in the circumstances the election could, not without justice, be represented as having saved Germany, that is, from the point of view of those who held that either Socialism or reaction would have been its ruin.

What had made possible the victory had been the alliance between the army command and the Ebert government. It was an unequal alliance because, while the Government was concerned only to use it to crush extremism, the army command regarded the crushing of Bolshevism as only a stage in a process. This is not to deny the sincerity of the democratic views expressed by important representatives of the army, who were honestly willing to try the experiment of parliamentary democracy. These, however, were not only in a minority but were quite clear that democracy was not a cause to be fought for but an experiment to be tried and if it did not produce efficient government to be discarded. The majority of Ebert's military supporters were quite frankly reactionary; they did not want necessarily a return of the Hohenzollern, but they did want the maintenance of government in the hands of those classes which had hitherto exercised it and which were regarded by them as the incorruptible custodians of that mysterious entity, Germany's honour.

The Assembly had two tasks, to settle the constitution and to sign the Treaty of Peace. The lines on which the former would be framed had been laid down by the election; the new constitution

would be a compromise, a democratic one. Under it the democratic coalition might have done useful work in normal times. But the times were not normal; for four months after the Assembly met Germany was still officially at war.

She was indeed actually so because, in anticipation of the treaty, the Poles had annexed considerable portions of German territory. The Allies justified the Polish revolution and ordered the evacuation of the territories under dispute. By the armistice terms Germany had, of course, no army at all, but a certain degree of laxity was permitted both as regards demobilization and the furnishing of organized units to support the government; the Allies too have their share in the bloodguiltiness which ended the German revolution. The laxity was abused; it could not help being abused. As "order" was restored in each state, irregular state forces had been formed which were a useful adjunct to the regulars. In Bavaria in particular, where after Eisner's murder revolution had run its gamut through a Left Socialist and then a Bolshevik revolution, with its attendant horrors, a whole series of irregular bands had been formed which co-operated with government troops in a regular blood-bath which, as is characteristic, had wiped out the horrors of a Red terror in the greater horrors of a White. To the irregulars could now be left the maintenance of order. The regular formations—or formations more or less organized by government order—were gradually concentrated towards the threatened eastern marches. General headquarters had gone eastwards and regular military preparations were being made for resistance to the Poles. The matter of the eastern frontier was a national matter; it could not be a matter of indifference to patriotic Germans that old historic territory was being seized by an inferior race which they honestly believed was—as was very near the truth—within an ace of falling under Bolshevism and was at any rate entirely incapable of keeping the Russians out of Western Europe. When General Hoffmann spoke of the German army as the bulwark between Moscow and the Allied armies on the Rhine, he spoke with conviction and was very close to an accurate description of the military situation. Not only to him but to very many Germans and not a few foreigners the irregular

formations—the soon to be notorious “Freikorps”—were not only fighting their country’s legitimate battles but Europe’s when they bickered with the Poles, lent a hand to the German element in the newly arisen Baltic states and for a moment were within an ace of creating new German territories in the Baltic area as an alternative to seeing them pass into the hands of Russia again.

The Freikorps* were popular enough. They were composed in the main of three elements—soldiers, mainly young soldiers, from the front line who preferred to go on soldiering, youthful idealists of the aristocratic and professional classes who had experience of local *Bolshevisants*, and frank adventurers. They included thus the common mercenary who will do anything for pay, food, and drink and the genuine if heady patriot whose youthful imagination saw himself as the legitimate successor of Luetzow and Koerner in a struggle against a tyranny much more deadly because much more politic than Napoleon’s. The opinion of the civilians depended on the type they encountered and their own private opinions on the issues of the day. To one half of those who seriously thought about them, the Freikorps were “the gallant watch on the German marches,” to the other they were “the sinister blood-hounds of reaction.” There was more truth in either description than any partisan was willing to admit.

But to the Allied powers, busied with rearranging Europe and finding the task more difficult than they had thought, the military measures taken in Germany seemed to indicate that the German army had stopped demobilizing and was reconcentrating. They at once began to act on the more and more sensational reports sent them by their agents by bombarding the unfortunate government with notes. The defence of the frontiers and the retention of trained troops in regular formations might be a question of prestige to the army command quite apart from the fact that they considered such formations necessary. The government could not afford to think in terms of prestige and, when it considered neces-

* A history of the Freikorps is badly wanted, and is not really supplied by the memoirs of Killinger, Roehm, Luettwitz, etc., or pieces of adulation like the current biographies of Schlageter, Epp, and the like. K. W. v. Oertzen’s *Kamerad, reich mir die Hand* (Berlin, 1933) is idealizing but useful.

sity, the prior necessity was to give the Allies no excuse for drastic action. Despite its professions of simplicity it had already a fairly accurate idea of the sort of terms that were going to be presented to the German people and it had an uneasy feeling that powerful military forces would not improve the situation when the day of presentation came. Now began a game of cross-purposes between the government and the army command, a game which was rapidly approaching a deadlock as the military grew more and more restive at governmental interference with their liberty of action, when the peace terms at last became public property.

It is a little difficult now, after the fierce criticisms of many years, criticisms based on realization of the results of its work, to recapture the atmosphere of these hectic days and understand both the actions of the Peace Conference and the reaction of the German public to them, and not to read into the anti-treaty agitation of that day elements which actually are present only at a later date. The atmosphere that reigned in 1919 was primarily one of disillusion. Considered historically, the treaty was only what might have been expected. The vanquished must pay and the payment exacted after a war of peoples is not comparable to the payment exacted after a war of dynasties. If the German nation had compared calmly the terms presented to them to those demanded by the empire in 1870 and to the treaties the old regime had made as lately as 1918, they could not but have realized that at a minimum the terms would include territorial loss, a crushing indemnity, and prolonged enemy military occupation. As a matter of fact, they were resigned to these, but there were two things that, taken together, were responsible for the immediate reaction of hostility. The first was that it was held that the extreme severity of the terms was due to ignorance of German conditions; it was not only the German plenipotentiaries who thought that if there had been a peace conference in the old style and not a dictated peace, the German delegates could have convinced the Allies that considerable modification was necessary. It was felt that the terms imposed were not only actually impossible of fulfilment, but that fulfilment would be of positive disadvantage to the economic and political life of the world. The second was that the terms seemed

to imply a deliberate attempt to reverse historical decisions to Germany's disadvantage. The loss of Alsace and Lorraine, of the colonies, was inevitable. But to the profit of states which had not existed in 1914 and which seemed to the German to have suffered disinterment rather than resurrection, territory of peculiar significance was cut from the living body of historical Germany. The average German had no conception of the fact that such loss actually was in the historical sense more inevitable—if the comparative be permitted—than the loss of Alsace. He regarded it as mere spoliation in the interests of the hereditary enemy—and the concession of plebiscites as adding insult to injury—as a definite sin against the principle of self-determination. And yet there was nothing more certain than that Flensburg and Danzig, Posen and Memel must go; behind all the selfishness and errors of Allied policy there was that historic necessity which can only be resisted, and never permanently resisted, by successful war.

On both points the German case was logically weak, but it was sentimentally very strong and sentiment is always a more dangerous foe than logic. In many respects the Allies had framed their decision of the case in such a way as to put themselves in the wrong. For one thing they had left the burden undetermined. In the summer of 1919 the German knew neither how much territory he was going to lose nor how much not merely he but his children's children would have to pay. In these circumstances neither economic nor political stability is possible and posterity is an ally before it is born. In the second place the Allies represented the terms not as the verdict of historic justice but as the punitive judgment of an ecclesiastical court. The losses became really intolerable when represented as the punishment for moral turpitude. This is the significance of the notorious war-guilt clause in the treaty. It was intended to exhibit Germany to the world as a justly punished criminal. There was a reasoned case to be made out for her criminality; the defect of placing it without such reasoning in the treaty was that it made the most revolutionary—in the historical sense of the word—document of modern times apparently dependent not on law or even on force for its validity, but on the moral value of an extorted confession of a guilt which

was perfectly incapable of legal proof and on which there existed no legal tribunal which was competent to decide.

Nations, even great nations, have had to accept terms which meant their disappearance as operative factors from historical evolution, but nations, even minor nations, do not take kindly to a confession of transgression against someone else's conception of a non-existent international morality. The German was in worse case because he could not see, much less admit, that either personally or collectively he or his government or Germany was guilty of any moral offence whatsoever except the admittedly grave moral blemish of having been conquered. That people suffer for their rulers' sins is a common occurrence; this was the first time that the necessity of such suffering had been raised to the level of a moral dogma on which no discussion was permitted. Worse still, out of the bloody welter and chaos of the war these righteous judges proposed to create now the new moral order by whose non-existent laws Germany was judged, an order which would make all such crime impossible in the future. Germany was to remain pilloried to eternity as the one great and horrible example and from that new order the new revolutionary Germany was to be barred as a moral leper until in this legal Borstal she learned that after confession must come not only repentance but conversion.

It was, therefore, natural that Germany should be stunned not merely by the terms of the treaty but also by the manner of their presentation and the method of their justification. It was not surprising that the German should be indignant at the failure to realize that there had already been conversion. Dismiss the German urge to democracy as one will, the fact remains that the German nation had got rid of the autocracy—it was the fact, not the manner, that weighed with the German—that it had repented of war madness, that it had established a democratic regime. To the best minds of Germany the establishment of democracy was much more than a mere change of regime, more even than a victory for a great principle; to them it meant that Germany had abandoned her historic position of an Imperial power in Europe; she had severed age-long ties and had come voluntarily to join the western democracies. They felt that in some peculiar way the

revolution, such as it was, was a demonstration of the solidarity of the West and its civilization, an affirmation of the unity of Europe, and instead it had afforded a reason for something which is quite irrationally described as balkanization and was quite rationally described as making permanent a long schism on the ground that there was no reason to believe that it had been healed. That was a verdict that no thinking German could accept. Behind all the propaganda that has raged ever since Versailles there abides the fact that the Peace Treaty committed a flagrant offence against common sense by failing to recognize that the solidarity of the west is the only guarantee of the preservation of the civilization which in the true sense we call European, and by that failure loading unnecessary dice in favour of its inveterate enemies by throwing one essential part of it into their arms. To end a war for the solidarity of humanity by making European solidarity next to impossible was a greater moral offence than the precipitation of the war, and the anger and shame of every German democrat was justified to the hilt.

What was perhaps hardly less natural was that the wrath of the nation turned in no small degree against the new order. It was only now that men began to remember that Germany had surrendered before she was defeated utterly. It was inevitable that it should now be said that she had surrendered willingly to serve great international political ends, to prevent unnecessary loss of life and to enable co-operation to succeed to enmity. Yet after such an unselfish surrender what worse terms could have been presented to her if she had gone on fighting and suffered Allied dictation in Berlin? It was the new order that had carried through the surrender, for it was easy to forget the rôle played by the army command. What worse terms could have been submitted to Wilhelm II? It was the new order which had bade the nation put its trust in the Fourteen Points and the Allied professions of devotion to democracy and the right of self-determination. What worse terms could an old-fashioned autocratic imperialism have dictated? It was the new order which had smashed the old Germany in the name of European solidarity. What worse terms could an anti-European conqueror have offered? And the new

order, just because it was not nearly so new as it sometimes claimed to be, was no less outraged. It was willing to admit "the guilt of Wilhelm Hohenzollern"; it not only had admitted it but had avenged it by revolution. Yet it was now asked, after its solemn repudiation of responsibility, to justify punishment of its innocent self by a confession of active complicity in a crime for which it had a perfect political alibi, and confess it in such a way as to admit that Germany, the new Germany, the democratic Germany and every individual German in it, including the unborn, was blood-guilty of an outrage on humanity and was not worthy to associate with civilized men. In all its exaggeration of bitterness, in all its outraged romanticism, the indignation was natural and it provoked a graver crisis, moral and material, than even the days of November had done.

The first feeling was that acceptance was impossible. Except on the extreme Left every party fulminated against the treaty, and for one moment the Allies seemed to have achieved what all the goodwill in Germany had failed to create, a united nation; the survivors of the old regime raised their heads again; they were once again one with the nation in a nation of common criminals. They had failed to oppose the revolution because they had been divided; they could oppose the treaty because they were united. Amid excited enthusiasm the government resigned rather than accept; the military leaders clamoured for the war to be renewed—all except the little group of responsible heads. Anxiously statesmen and generals discussed the details of a dangerous situation while outside parties and people demonstrated. But after the first excitement realization of Germany's position began to seep in. The majority of the consultants were against acceptance. They realized the alternative, invasion, occupation, and worse terms, but they felt that even a negative gesture in defence of the national honour was politically necessary. There was no real question of resistance; the army command said that it was, from the military point of view, impossible; the politicians said that it was equally so from the political point of view; both, however, felt that non-acceptance was the only true course; it was the only defence of Germany that could be made in a situation where defence of

some kind ought to be made, and it threw on the war-hating allies the responsibility of renewing hostilities. Eventually a compromise was reached. Majority Socialists and Centrists formed a new cabinet and proposed qualified acceptance, including the repudiation of war-guilt, an acceptance which was carried only by the votes of the extreme Left. But no qualifications were to be permitted; in a note of menacing clarity the Allies demanded unconditional surrender. It was impossible to get a majority for surrender in the Assembly; the cabinet accepted sole responsibility; the opposition gave it a testimonial which repeated the verdict against acceptance but admitted that the cabinet was acting from patriotic motives, and two of its members—names which ought to live in German history as those of men capable of historic sacrifice—Hermann Mueller and Johannes Bell, a Socialist and a Centrist, represented in their persons the national humiliation at Versailles. The bells of Paris rang out to show that the war was over; in Germany there were no bells ringing; instead men were preparing to haul down the German flag in old German cities and many of the best of the younger generation were swearing in their hearts that the war had not yet begun.

To-day, after the legend-making, the signature is described as the betrayal of Germany by "the November traitors," who refused to compromise the sordid gains of the revolution by answering the demand of the nation for resistance. The truth is that much of the indignation described as existing in 1919 is a quite different indignation that came later. That Germany was indignant is undoubted, but there was no real will to resistance. At the melancholy conferences before decision was taken, it was admitted even by bitter advocates of resistance that 85 per cent of the nation would not fight, and that was something much more decisive than the scientific opinion on military possibilities given by the army command. For the signature the whole nation is responsible, not parties, and still less individuals. There was no great figure to whip lassitude into frenzy and defeatism into heroism. How could there be? There was no Stein, no Fichte, no Koerner on the immediate morrow of Jena; there was not even a Blücher. All that might come, but could only come later. That the decision

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was unheroic is clear. In the light of later knowledge and on general principles, heroism might have paid. But there was no heroism; it is only people who refuse to read history who, seeing Germany as she is, think that for Germany as she was any other decision was possible. There was not only no heroism, there was positive defeatism; the South German states frankly said that if they were faced by invasion they would break away from the Reich and make their own terms. When the Long Walls of Athens were being pulled down at the demilitarizing behest of her enemies, a direct ancestor of the Freikorps youngster cried to the "November traitor," Theramenes: "Dare you deliver up to Spartans the walls built by Themistocles?" "Boy," was the crushing answer, "I do nought contrary to Themistocles. He raised these walls to save the citizens. We, to save them, cast them down." The military conventionalist, Hindenburg, advised against acceptance; Hannibal, who was no conventionalist, dragged with his own hands from the rostrum an orator who wanted to carry on the war after Zama. Dying for a lost cause is perhaps the finest manifestation of the sense of personal honour and personal loyalty; dying for a cause one has already declined to die for because it was lost is supreme political futility. The time for heroics was long since past; even heroism would have come too late.

The worst feature of the history of the signature is not the surrender, but the complete unscrupulousness with which the anti-republican elements sought to make party capital out of it. No more than any other section of the nation had they the courage to die for a lost cause as they could have done, yet they now took credit for a hypothetical determination to participate in a general suicide if only someone had been there to order it. The alliance between the government and the army command was definitely broken; Hindenburg ostentatiously resigned his chiefship of the general staff and many other generals followed him at long last into retirement. The action was symbolical rather than important for the treaty abolished the general staff and reduced Germany's defence force to a long-service professional army of one hundred thousand men. Till the new Reichswehr was properly constituted

the government would have no troops to depend on and it might well have to reckon with the still undemobilized units and volunteer corps as potential enemies. It was one of the best strokes of luck the republic ever had that when the Reichswehr was constituted it got a scientific realist soldier with a keen if individual sense of duty to be its head; an ambitious intriguer or a ruthless romanticist in the place of Seeckt might well have wrecked Germany and every hope of recovery for a generation.

The cabinet—into which the Democrats, once someone else had accepted responsibility for the treaty, eventually returned—now found itself harassed on two flanks. On the one the Allies were pressing constantly and not always considerately for “fulfilment” of the treaty; on the other there gathered round the Nationalist party—the party of the old regime which included nearly all the notable people of Wilhelmian days from Grand Admiral von Tirpitz to an obscure propagandist of the old Pan-German League, Wolfgang Kapp—all those who took upon themselves to represent the “national” cause, made themselves the centre of the opposition at once to the treaty and the regime, and did everything they could to hamper the government in what was perhaps not a completely wholehearted attempt to honour its signature. The thought of a future revenge had been a powerful stimulus to recruitment for the Freikorps, which now became definitely political. They were no longer merely forces against a foreign enemy and internal anarchy; they were forces of reaction and counter-revolution. The position of the Freikorps mostly under junior officers and officials was immensely strengthened by the more or less open patronage of a great political party and, as their ranks filled and their action grew more violent, the Allies grew more and more insistent on their disbandment. The demand was just and right, but it was exceedingly difficult for the government to fulfil it owing to the strength of the Freikorps and their prestige in many parts of the nation. Lacking a reliable police and military force, its writ hardly ran outside Berlin and, in South Germany, state governments openly defied the central government by taking the Freikorps to all intents and purposes under their protection. The crisis came when the Allies insisted on the

instant disbandment of a fine body of irregulars, the Marine Brigade, stationed at Doeberitz. It was on such picked troops that the Nationalists relied for the eventual *coup d'état*, and, counting too much on the implications of such reliance, a little extremist group, headed by the obscure Kapp and a diehard general, Luettwitz, raised the standard of armed rebellion, declared the Republic abolished and marched the Marine Brigade into Berlin (March 1920).

The result was farce of the most miserable kind, which showed only too plainly how vain had been any hopes of resistance to the treaty. Not a soul, not an association, helped the rebels. The other Freikorps were too busy with their own concerns; the state governments were frankly hostile; the official Nationalist party refused even to bless them until they were successful; most important of all, Germany's new army stood aloof; if the attitude of its chiefs was equivocal they were at least negatively loyal to the regime. When the Socialist party and the trade unions called a general strike the whole movement collapsed.

Its failure showed up the feebleness of the counter-revolutionary party; it also showed up the malignancy of the "national" opposition and the weakness of the government. The situation had been saved entirely by the action of the workers. Here was a lesson for the democratic coalition, if it was democratic. Democracy in Germany was safe if it based itself on the democratic elements; the lesson that a strong and vigorous Socialist party was the one real basis of democracy in Germany was once more reinforced. But the government refused to learn it. The strikers, flushed with their victory, were inclined to stay out till they had consolidated it. They wanted to see insurrection not merely defeated but punished, and they wanted the Socialist aspect of the government's work greatly extended. Under the influence of Left extremists a great number of the strikers refused to go back unless guarantees were secured against the "national" intriguers. This was the inevitable end of the compromising concession-to-the-enemy policy adopted by the official party, which had made a timid bourgeois regime out of the promise of a strong Socialist state. There was bitter evidence already that the bourgeois

democracy was no friend to the workers and the government obligingly supplied more. Eventually the majority of the strikers took the advice of the trade union leaders, always and perpetually scared of Bolshevism, and went back, but a considerable proportion remained out and inevitably, with the assistance of the Communists, sought to turn political strike action into a revolutionary movement. There was nasty street fighting in Berlin and in other big cities, and in the industrial Ruhr area it came to civil war. Here class consciousness was at its height, here there was a regular revolutionary organization, and the answer to the government's demand for cessation of strike action was a regular rising. The help that the Freikorps had denied Kapp and the help that the Reichswehr had denied the government was at once forthcoming against the workers. Regular and irregular forces poured into the Ruhr to maintain the cause of law and order against the Red Guards. Outnumbered and badly munitioned the insurgents put up a magnificent resistance in their squalid streets, but were crushed with a thoroughness and a viciousness that was in striking contrast to the tenderness with which the Kappists had been treated. Once again the government, of which a Socialist was the head, added unnecessarily to the blood of the martyrs.

The political situation was now in full confusion. The National Assembly engaged in finishing up its constitutional tasks by passing the legislation necessary for the working of the democratic constitution was the scene of bitter debates and narrow divisions, with ominous signs of rift not merely in the democratic block but in the individual democratic parties. The foreign political situation, if less confused, for the Allied actions were facts on which confusion was hardly possible, was still extremely confusing. Between evacuation of territory according to the treaty and the occupation of more territory by the Allies to enforce fulfilment, in a troubled world where some twenty campaigns were in more or less vigorous swing, the result of more than one of which might have decisive international result, between the anger caused by French aggression and the despair caused by the fulfilment of the treaty, the government was in no measure to control things with a parliament which was completely out of hand and

an electorate which threatened revolution and counter-revolution alike. To a body of tired dispirited men the announcement that the National Assembly had finished its work and could now retire to allow the first constitutionally elected regular parliament to take its place came as a distinct relief. The Assembly was dissolved and the parties girded up jaded loins for the first serious electoral battle that Germany had known.

This is a convenient point at which to examine the nature of the parliamentary democracy that had been created and the parties that were struggling for power in it. The parties represented very fairly an uninterrupted and logical development from the parties of the old regime, each having moved as it were one pace to the left. In that interesting but impotent body the Bismarckian Reichstag, the Right had been formed by the Conservative party, the party of the aristocracy and not, as it is sometimes described, the party of the court. It was pre-eminently a factious party. It was composed of the best born, most respected, and probably, taking all things into consideration, the ablest men in Germany; it provided chancellors and ministers, generals and diplomatists, yet it could never bear to delegate its caste-power even to representatives of itself. It always acted as if it was the *de jure* government of Germany and as if it was its plain right to depose monarchs and upset chancellors the moment that it disagreed with them on national policy. It was the guardian of the Prussian tradition and as such claimed a prerogative such as no other aristocracy has claimed. To it Germany was neither an autocracy nor a limited democracy; it was an aristocracy which had been compelled by circumstances without its control to delegate certain of its powers. It had no need to resolve any intellectual conflict between party interests and national interests for the simple reason that there was to it no conflict. It was the nation; after the collapse of the autocratic regime it was the only party that put "national" into the official party title.

"National" is a word which has in this country, up to a very recent date at least, not much more than an inclusive geographical sense. It is an adjective that does not here stir the blood as at the sound of a trumpet, not even in the mouth of a great orator,

still less when prefacing the name of an organized charity, scientific society, or trade union. Membership of the "National" Union of Teachers is no criterion of Conservative patriotism, and there is no reason why the Communist party should not properly, comprehensibly, and without any suspicion of ideological inconsistency call itself the "National" Communist party, especially when some of its members were also members of the "National" Minority Movement.

But in Germany, to call any association "national" is to suggest a subtle sort of exclusiveness, to hint or even to state that its members are somehow truer Germans than non-members. The adjective, in the opinion of the sheep, divides the sheep from the goats and gains force from the fact that the goats have always been too goatish to take up the implied challenge. It stands for an undefined assertion of patriotism, of devotion to an ideal, of loyalty to Luther, the Great Elector, Goethe, Frederick the Great and the heroes of 1813, to Bismarck and the Empire, though at any time in the preceding centuries the "national" party might have found any of these sadly wanting in "national" feeling; one may recollect the charges brought against Bismarck. Every German understands at once what it implies, though he rarely succeeds in explaining it comprehensibly to the foreigner, or why the great democratic parties could not use it and why the subversive party of Hitler did. "National" Bolshevism, a phrase which in Moscow must cast grave doubts on the mental health of the maker, is perfectly comprehensible and sane in Germany. When the Conservative party called itself "national" everyone in Germany knew that it meant that it alone was the inheritor of the old tradition and its guardian and to a very large extent, even if in certain quarters with resentment, the claim was admitted and a superior brand of patriotism recognized.

The collapse of the old regime, which was essentially its regime, came as an overwhelming shock to the governing class, particularly to those who socially and economically directly depended on it and even to those magnificent relics of a glorious if very distant past who regarded the Hohenzollern as shady middle-class upstarts. Defeat was bad enough but there had been defeat before; it was

the complete inability of its own regime to subsist that had shattered its confidence. When it recovered itself sufficiently to reorganize itself after the armistice in a form compatible with the new regime, there hung over it the double responsibility of failure and abdication, and the elections to the Assembly had been a very accurate estimate of the real numerical strength of the class which had been so long the scarcely challenged masters of Germany. In the land which it actually had governed and on the whole had governed well, it was no small ordeal to have to admit that it was only a small and ineffective political party. But the shock was purely a nervous shock. It was not moral and it could not be intellectual, and so it was easy for it with the splendid perverted logic of the privileged to convince itself that it was Germany which had failed and fallen, not itself which had kept and would keep faith. What had triumphed were the "anti-national" forces; it was the plain duty of the "national" party to see that their triumph was short-lived.

The curious thing, inexplicable in itself though it explains so much, was that its adversaries did so little to disprove, much less contest, its claim. There is no trace in the German revolution of any "death to the aristo" spirit; even the proletariat in Germany possessed the historic sense and let it conquer political reason. There was nothing snobbish about that sense; it was inherent and barely comprehended; it showed itself in a genuine national pride in the historic German names, a pride that sometimes creeps comically out of official maledictions. Germany never denied that within her realm there was a class that was apart and exclusive; without that sense that was supreme in Germany, it would have been beyond the power even of Ebert's bourgeois conservatism to have saved the nobility; as it was, the German "revolution" was the one revolution from which there was no emigration. The Right, once the storm passed, found itself intact, privileges and all, save the one precious privilege of ruling the state.

Its one aim was to reassert that privilege. A good deal of confusion, mainly created by those who mistook transient phenomena for historic realities, was caused by representing the Nationalists as a monarchist party. The Nationalist party in history never was

a royalist party; it has always been a party of class domination and that is the true significance of Frederick's phrase about being the first servant of the state, for to him as to his fellows, the class and the state were one. What gave rise to a whole series of tales of plots for a Hohenzollern restoration was only the rhetoric talked by sentimental old soldiers. What the Nationalist party wanted, and this explains the enthusiasm of the Hohenzollern for Hitler, was not the restoration of a house or of monarchy as such, but the restoration of class rule; that was what they meant by "monarchism." That was the bond that held a motley and factious crew together; in defeat and deposition it first found unity.

That new unity transcended many differences. Some individuals were pathetically loyal to the fallen emperor and his house; some regarded him merely as a pawn in the game; to others he and his descendants had put themselves definitely beyond the pale. Some had curious little particularist faiths of their own; the great majority stood for Prussia as Germany, or, if they could not swallow, owing to the fact of non-Prussian birth, the full doctrines of Prussianism, stood for a curious entity they called Prussia-Germany which was wonderfully allied to the Holy Roman Empire and the migrations. Some stood for the aristocracy of birth; others for the class power conferred by wealth. Left alone they were simply a congeries of interests. Placed in a modern democratic state they were a formidable unity in the faith that any interest the individual or the group represented could best be served by a return to the old authoritarian state under any form one might devise provided that they constituted the authoritarian element. By that faith they stand firm to-day.

Their mission in the Republic was perpetual opposition; for the moment it was complete opposition to anything and everything the republican regime might do irrespective of what its merits were. Quite cynically they claimed, as one of their spokesmen has claimed in regard to the Polish policy of the Papen-Hitler regime, that a good policy is not good unless it is carried out by a "national" party, and that if it is carried out by an "anti-national" party, then, however good in itself it may be, it must be opposed

by the "national" element. The Peace Treaty gave them their golden opportunity. Just because they were the official opposition they became *par excellence* the opposition to the treaty. The Allies, who saw in them their most serious foes, obligingly handed them the most superb of all weapons—a genuine patriotic issue. They concentrated to themselves and used with complete cynicism all the idealism and disillusion that the treaty provoked, balancing its most unscrupulous use with a nice sense of possible danger to themselves. They did nothing to prevent the signature of the treaty, but they used the signature, for which they could not simply divest themselves of responsibility by saying so, as a weapon against the republicans. They had all the prestige of being the one incorruptible patriotic party, and their factious opposition was excused because curiously enough it was understood. That was the result of patriotic revolutionary tradition. In the French revolutions it was the aristocracy that was the anti-patriotic party. When the Bourbons compromised themselves with the national enemy and Napoleon III capitulated before it, it was men of the people who organized and incarnated the national resistance. It was an incalculable advantage to the German Nationalists that they were tamely allowed to represent themselves as the fount of any possible resistance to foreign aggression.

In the old Reichstag the National Liberals sat next to the Conservatives, a party of great traditions but traditions that were intellectual rather than party political, the party of industry, trade, and the learned professions. It had suffered many vicissitudes as it varied between co-operation with and hostility to Bismarck in the cause of Liberal democracy of the nineteenth-century German type. In the course of evolution it had lost all true liberalism except a doctrinaire veneer and became so completely a party of interests that its livelier and more progressive elements had long ago revolted and founded a party called the *Freisinnige* (Liberal thinkers)—the Progressives. To the Nationalist Right these two parties bore much the same relation as the English Liberal and Conservative parties would bear to a diehard Tory party presuming that party were led by Churchills, Talbots, Stanleys, and Percys who had lost their English sense of

humorous proportion. During the war the two parties had opposed each other with increasing bitterness, the Liberals under Stresemann voting against the Peace resolution and vigorously supporting the army command. In the nation, however, the general Liberal opinion was strongly in favour of the Progressives, and when the end came these had attracted to their party many of the ablest men in Germany. A group of these made the Progressives the basis of a new party, the Democratic party, whose first manifesto was signed by Georg Bernhard, Bernstorff, Richard Dehmel, Albert Einstein, Gerhart Hauptmann, Max Lieberman, Walther Rathenau, Werner Sombart, Adam Stegerwald, and Hugo Stinnes—the pick of the best brains in Germany's intellectual and commercial life. They excluded the National Liberal leaders and Stresemann found himself without a party. Nothing daunted, he founded the German People's party, composed in the main of the big industrialists whose hearts had not been touched by the democratic appeal and who yet could not quite aspire to membership of the "National" party; by the circumstances of its composition as well as by the nature of its components it was a thoroughly Conservative party, much nearer to the Nationalists than to the Democrats. Its republicanism was lukewarm and it looked for salvation to a strong Right government. What the Democrats looked to is much less clear. It may, on the whole, be said that they justified their name and were a party of ideas rather than a party of action, standing for Liberalism rather than for a Liberal programme, and they had ruined all chances of founding what was eminently desirable, a great centre party, by their understandable but not very intelligent tactics towards Stresemann and his colleagues. Their wealth of intellectual talent was an embarrassment, for intellectual talent is by nature individualist and could not produce intellectual unity much less political unity in a form that would appeal to the nation. Intellectual liberalism, invaluable as a critic to political life, is invariably sterile if it is not allied to a generous romanticism that can sweep the less intellectual element off its feet. To any great Liberal party to-day a Garibaldi and a Mazzini are infinitely more necessary than an Adam Smith or a John Stuart Mill. The tragedy of the

Liberal *intelligentsia* in Germany is the completeness of its intellectuality—and its ineffectiveness.

Next to the Democrats came the Centrum, which for a brief moment called itself after the revolution the Christian People's party, but found it almost immediately wiser to revert to the old name. It started as a confessional party and such it remained. Its early days of struggle against Bismarck, when it was an ultra-montanist, anti-Prussian and almost anti-German party, had long ago been forgotten. Long before the war it had become respectable, an integral part of German political life, a Roman Catholic party of unimpeachable loyalty, with the defence of Catholic rights as its main aim and actually a Catholic party embracing every class from the humblest workman or peasant to the great landowner and empurpled cardinal. That a body so varied could never agree on a political programme did not matter in the pre-war period, when it really mattered very little whether it had a formal programme or not. It was, however, naturally inclined to side with the democratic parties simply because in a land where Catholics are in a minority they are likelier to find support for their claim to equality from the Left than from the Right. In the later pre-war period it was largely a party which could be bought, and supported the government or opposed it as willingness to pay varied. But under younger leaders it had latterly begun to develop a policy which was more virtuously democratic, and under pressure of war politics it became not only an integral, but a leading partner in the democratic coalition. By the end of the war period it had become almost entirely a political party on a confessional basis with a republican policy of its own. The fact that it was an integral part of the republican democratic coalition and supplied many of that coalition's ablest leaders made even close observers fail to see that what had been a necessity under Bismarck had become an anomaly. In the democratic parliamentary state there is no place for a confessional party. Democracy guaranteed all the rights which it was ostensibly created to preserve, and from that moment, for the defence of the religious interests of what from the point of view of the state was one creed, one sect among many, a political party was not the proper instrument. It perpetuated a political

division that was not only not necessary but was harmful and perpetuated a confusion of issues that seriously embarrassed the legitimate parties. There were times when the Centrum stood very definitely and decisively for democracy and sane policy against reaction and mad adventure and it did the Republic good service, but as a vertical section in a horizontally arranged party state it prevented the consolidation of strong democratic parties by dividing the democracy on a non-political issue. Its members should have swelled the ranks of the historic parties instead of continuing to form yet another one.

It was, of course, hardly to be expected that the Centrum, which contained so many able and ambitious professional politicians, should ever have admitted this; it is curious to notice that some of its extreme conservative members got very close to admitting it and when the Hitler-Papen dictatorship, for its own ends, adduced the obviousness of superfluity as a reason for dissolution, the Centrum quietly dissolved at the very moment when, for the first time in forty years, a strong party was necessary for the object of its foundation, the defence of Roman Catholicism. It was not natural that there should be any inclination to recognize the political advantage to others of self-immolation. The Centrum leaders honestly felt they had a mission to perform in standing politically for the Christian state even if they took their stand on what to others was a narrow confessional basis. They saw no confusion in making a unity out of the duality of a religious and a political mission nor the difficulty of performing a dual mission in a democracy. It is to the existence of the Centrum that we must ascribe some at least of the artificiality that characterizes the party system as it was established in 1919. It was always a strong party numerically in parliament and invariably held the balance between Left and Right without ever being able to perform, thanks to its vertical structure, the duties of a centre party proper. During all the history of the Republic any reasonable coalition would have been at its mercy. It not merely forced German political history to be one of uneasy coalitions but it prevented the establishment of any coherent, rational coalition. By virtue of possessing a confessional mission which in this case was inevitably confused, not

to say identified, with a political mission, it felt that in whatever direction the balance of power swung it must not fail to be on that side and in the resultant government; equally having got in it must be on its guard primarily against its colleagues. Thus in a Left coalition it was a Conservative element; in a Right coalition it was a Liberal element.* It thus eternally prevented the creation of a system of alternative coalitions taking the place of the ideal for democratic government—the system of alternative parties as holders of power—and even went so far as to insist on the creation of a minority coalition—the *reductio ad absurdum* of parliamentary practice—rather than admit the possibility of a coalition without it. The consequences of that action will be seen later; here it must suffice to call attention to a factor in the downfall of the Republic which has not yet, one believes, been adequately examined, and which might repay critical investigation.

On the Left sat the Socialist parties. The old Socialist party had the most consistent record of any German party and the only really adequate national organization, but since 1914 it had undergone considerable transformations. Under the old empire it had been *par excellence* the party of opposition, the revolutionary anti-patriotic party, all of which terms it was to refute in August 1914. Banned from participation in the state, it formed a little state within the state, with its paraphernalia of government organization, discipline, functionaries, and press. From this political fastness, which was based on the trade unions, it kept watch over the interests of the workers and, as these increased alike in number, prosperity, and importance, tended to become, in spite of intellectual ferment and conventional rhetoric, a conservative stabilizing force rather than a revolutionary one. The general history of the trade union movement in the later stages of industrialism is that of an evolution from a relatively small impoverished proletariat of manual workers to a great national class of skilled and semi-skilled workers, possessing property in the shape of savings, houses, pensions, and insurances with, therefore,

* It is surely needless to point out that in the nature of things no Roman Catholic party can ever *be* a Liberal party, though it may find it useful to vote *with* a Liberal party.

an interest in the rights of property and in the prosperity of the nation; in short, with a very definite stake in the country. The decline in genuine revolutionary fervour and the evolution towards a proper parliamentary party willing to accept office had become very noticeable before the war and the war completed the process. We have seen already how older tendencies reasserted themselves and how, reconciliation of the old with the new being impossible, the great Socialist movement split, united for a brief moment under the pressure of revolutionary events, only to split again. The Majority Socialists had, in effect, become a radical trade unionist party, although many of their members in the Reichstag and in the country were not trade unionists, whose aim was the conservation and extension of the economic and political power of the worker through government control rather than through Marxian socialization and certainly not through a proletarian dictatorship. Except that they avoided liberal ideology, they were a bourgeois radical party representing particularly that settled element in the working class that has become or intends to become middle class. The Independents represented the traditional revolutionary socialism of pre-war days, but owing to the special circumstances in which they had become a party identified it with pacifism. Their pacifism crippled them as revolutionaries and their socialism tended to be doctrinaire, but was kept a living force by the schism. As against the governmental conservatism of the Majority they did stand for a living revolutionism. That revolutionism was the more impressive as the Majority tended more and more to lose what revolutionism its members had acquired in 1917-18. They were the more class conscious of the two parties, but apart from the genuine "Marxists" that class consciousness was due less to revolutionary conviction than to the class action of the government. In a modern state there is no surer way to awaken class consciousness than by class persecution and, if the persecution is ill-judged enough, it is amazing what types and individuals will experience awakening. Thus there really was no rational explanation of who was a member of each or why; the whole schism would have been completely irrational if political reasons had not been there to

offer an explanation which merely social grounds could not have afforded. But it was a real schism in the sense that the Independents were a true Socialist party with a Socialist programme they had no chance of realizing, while the Majority were a radical party with a radical programme which they framed in Socialist terms. But the workers did not ask about programmes. They asked simply who ordered the troops to fire, and by the answer and its explanation took their individual stand.

As the Independent opposition was not fundamentally revolutionary, the true revolutionary element in the Russian sense, for Russia was now the criterion of revolutionary orthodoxy, would have none of them. Repression had driven the survivors of Spartacism to definite and permanent extremism which had adopted completely and uncritically Russian ideology and Russian tactics; they had formed a Communist party (December 1918), but their numbers were so small and themselves so unrepresentative of any class that as a party they hardly counted. It was the Independents who drew upon themselves the critical eyes of Moscow which saw in them a nasty spirit of independence, but also the possibility of a revolutionary Bolshevik nucleus. It was only after Moscow had failed to dominate them that Communism became a force.*

These then were the parties that faced each other in the republican parliament, grouped in a system not unlike that obtaining elsewhere. But the system had one peculiar defect. In the German Republic the parties did not start, so to speak, from zero; they had a definite historical past and they could never rid themselves of its influence. They carried into a completely different set of political conditions traditions and conceptions which were wholly anachronistic. In the old empire, which was not a party state in the proper sense of the term, there was no real party life; it may even be said there was no real political life in the sense of the definition of politics as a struggle for power. The

* The Communist party was little more than the extreme wing of the Independent Socialists until that party split in 1922, and its minority, rejecting reunion of the Socialist parties, joined up with the Communists. There were no Communist members in the Reichstag until the 1922 election just before the split.

parties were in one sense completely impotent, and they knew it. There was for them no question of any struggle for power; they had first to struggle for a change of system, and for that change there was no overwhelming national demand. Once revolution had been dismissed as impractical, party life took on a distinct aspect of unreality. No matter how great an electoral victory any party or combination got, it could make no constitutional progress unless it could coerce the government, and in any attempt at coercion the issue lay with the state forces, in effect with the army which, with the church and the landed aristocracy, formed the pillars of the Prussian state, and so of the regime. Inevitably, therefore, the parties lost touch not merely with political realities but with the nation. It was certainly the correct thing in pre-war Germany to belong to a party for social as well as political reasons, and party members rolled up obediently at election times when an appearance of reality was infused into party life by the chance given to demonstrate one's opinions and were duly elated at victory or depressed at loss. But what produced the appearance of reality was not the fact of a struggle for power but the fact of a struggle against Socialism or against reaction. And even that struggle was an academic one, becoming more and more academic as Socialism became "constitutional" and therefore respectable. But it was all a game—"shadow fighting," as the Germans most appropriately called it. The political life in the states was actually more real than in that of the Reich because there were vital issues which the parties could affect, and in Prussia there was, thanks to the mediaeval electoral system, a regular political issue of the first importance. It was in Prussia and not in the Reich that the real struggle with autocracy was carried on.

Not that the Reichstag indeed was wholly impotent; it could be both critical and obstructive, but a course in the development of the niceties of criticism and obstruction is no training for government. The parties had developed a peculiar life of the lobbies which militated against the first essential for government—leadership. They could be useful or embarrassing to a ministry as the case might be and they possessed, even under the existing law, formidable means of agitation in a powerful press. Latterly,

particularly under the dilettante Buelow, it became fashionable and convenient for the government to possess a parliamentary majority, and a curious unreal sort of parliamentarism came into being which deceived many people, including not a few Germans. To obtain a majority involved very delicate bargaining with the party executives which decided party policy. An elaborate system of mutual concessions was evolved whereby party policy was enabled to score undoubted successes without the regime ever being really affected. In such bargaining the democratic parties were extremely active. With the Socialists, of course, bargaining was pretty much out of the question; by the Right it was conducted with obvious disdain as of a nobleman bargaining for the sake of saving himself trouble with his butler. The Right knew well that the government was in the last resort in their pocket, that their control of Prussia was absolute and that any real conflict with any government could end finally only in one way. For the Reichstag and parliamentarism the Right had nothing but contempt, under which the parties writhed impotently but endured.

What had been produced as a result was an able set of politicians, party chiefs and lobbyists who had never had any responsibility nor ever really expected to have it. They had merely a well-defined set of interests to look after; that done they could indulge to their heart's delight the traditional German tendency to political metaphysics. Nowhere was political speculation of every kind, from the highest to the lowest, so indulged in as in Germany; there was hardly a single politician one could meet, professional or otherwise, who had not a complete "plan"—the Germans thought in terms of planning long before Lenin did—for the government of his country, beginning with the rearrangement of the Great Powers and a new constitution down to the utilizing of snowfields and beaches and the increase in the fat content of margarine. Except for those who were actually members of the administration, and these were only a very small proportion, none of the political leaders in Germany had any real experience of government; they had nearly all had supreme experience in negotiation. When it is remembered also that nearly all of them had in some commissioned or non-commissioned capacity actual

experience in disciplined command, it is not surprising that at first glance quite a number of them were mistaken for statesmen.

These were the men then who were suddenly called upon to take over a great nation in defeat and dissolution, men too who in addition to deficiencies that would have been a handicap in normal times were now suffering from the effects of a tremendous moral and physical strain. It was impossible for them to shake off past training, and the unreal character of the German revolution is seen in its entire failure to produce new leaders. There were not only no young men among the leaders of 1918-19; there were also no new leaders; every man who came into prominence between 1918 and 1923 had already years of administrative or political work behind him and inevitably he brought into the new sphere the practices and the outlook that had served well enough in the old. It was, for instance, just as impossible for Ebert at first to grasp the fact that a revolution cannot be run by the same methods as a trade union as for a later chancellor to see that the methods which enabled the Hamburg-Amerika line to prosper are not necessarily those by which a great nation can suitably be governed. The politicians in Germany had gone through no apprenticeship; the astonishing thing perhaps is that they made, on the whole, so few mistakes. But the mistakes they did make were nearly fatal.

When it came to the making of the constitution they were in their element. The Weimar constitution of August 1919 is in all respects a remarkable document. It is perhaps the most comprehensive constitution ever compiled, the best textbook so far written on modern democratic ideas. That was precisely the mistake that the theorist politicians in Germany were led into by their legal advisers, incidentally some of the ablest jurists in Europe. The constitution of a democratic Germany, a constitution which should lead the world and at the same time sacrifice none of the peculiar merits of the old regime, had been settled in principle even before the war. For those who were entrusted with the framing of that of 1919, all that required to be done was to arrange details, taking into account the new circumstances created by the revolution, and they performed their task with extraordinary

ability. But it was not that task that was urgent. What was urgent was strong settled government, not a comprehensive constitutional charter. There were far too many problems for them all to be settled out of hand as it were, for all time, for the least fortunate characteristic of a continental constitutional charter is its extreme rigidity. To apply a rigid constitution to a nation in flux was inopportune. All that was needed was a brief definition of functions such as the French made in 1875, such as would have enabled democratic government to work effectively, as would have preserved the new regime, and as would have formed a basis for the constitution of the future. Against that there were historical and political reasons. The tradition of definiteness militated against an imperfect *ad hoc* document and the flood-tide of democratic fervour demanded instant and comprehensive evidence in law of the democratic victory. When Hugo Preuss submitted the draft of the new charter the parties fell upon it with joy and gratitude, for if they did not understand revolutions and international crises, they did understand the minutiae of political theory and the technique of political bargaining. The final draft considerably altered the original and represents a very able compromise between the views of the three majority parties which settled everything in theory and left practice to providence. As was to be expected, they showed their anti-autocratic feelings by securing the primacy of the legislature and their sense of reality by making that primacy at least dubious, satisfying the legalist at the expense of the statesman. They showed their sense of the unity of Germany by destroying any possibility of Germany being regarded as a federation of states but refused to go so far as to define exactly the federalism that they meant. They laid down the primacy of the Reich in no uncertain manner, but they did not equally define the subordination of the states. They designed a noble edifice of democratic consolidation that is one of the triumphs of constitutional law, but they did not lay down the methods by which such consolidation could practically be obtained. There was in Germany no cry for a constitution as had been heard in Russia in 1905 and again in 1917, for the word and its reality were quite well known in Germany; her demand was not for a constitution so

much as for constitutional change. As a result no special reverence could be expected to attach to the new document; it would be required to prove itself and it was so long, so argumentative, and so elaborate that not a few Germans never succeeded in reading it, much less appreciating the aims of its makers. A rigid document to which there clings no halo of sacrosanctity is a snare and a delusion, for it evokes no real loyalty and so makes no appeal either to the imagination or to the emotion. In 1919 what Germany wanted was not a constitution, but evidence of a clear policy, domestic and foreign, and of strong determination to carry it out. To many the elaborate constitution seemed merely—and this not only among its natural enemies—a sort of camouflage, little more than an attempt to console outraged public feelings with a fat slab of paper. It seemed to solve nothing, a view that was perfectly correct, and what was wanted was solution of immediate difficulties.

What was worst of all was that it remained a document; it made no difference to the parties. Having accomplished their work of building an elaborate and impressive democratic structure, they felt that their task was confined to admiring it and reverted at once to the methods and practices that had obtained under the old regime and were so unsuited to the new—lobbying, intrigue, and compromise. If the English truly have a genius for compromise they must have realized how pale and feeble it is compared with that which presided over the destinies of the Republic. And to make it quite certain that the parties to go on existing would have to maintain these methods at all costs, the constitution-makers made the balance of parties almost stable by introducing the most mathematically exact system of proportional representation that had yet been seen, a system which alone condemned Germany to the utter weakness of perpetual coalition government, a weakness which, not apparent in peace and prosperity, is horribly visible in times of crisis and distress.

It is, of course, the essence of a democratic system that a balance of power should be inherent in its constitution and the sphere of any power circumscribed by definition. That need not mean the absence of strong government. But if under such a

system government is to be strong, there must be in the political sense strength of character in the leader and experience in the led. The Weimar debaters—perhaps they awaited a miracle—never seem to have sufficiently considered that prior necessity. The system they erected made strong government, as German conditions were,* next to impossible; they legislated in that intellectual vacuum in which men are seen as they ought to be and not as they are, legislated in fact for a democratic Germany which did not want a constitution so much as a creation.

In a very real sense what has been said above is unfair to the Weimar constitution for, after all, it is not the business of the constitution-maker to take a low view of humanity and legislate as if for knaves and fools. It is not his function to descend himself but to elevate others. But to do so adequately he must have one of two things; either he must have behind him a tremendous popular pressure on the part of a large majority which knows what it wants very clearly and is uncertain only of details, or he must have a guarantee of peaceful uninterrupted development. The men of the Weimar constitution had neither. There was no terrific popular urge to extreme democracy; there was only a longing for peace and normality. And most emphatically there was no guarantee of peaceful development nor could be while enemy armies were on German soil. The tragedy of the constitution lies in the fact that it came five years too soon.

Worse still, it coincided precisely with the national humiliation at Versailles. In the minds of an ever-growing section of public opinion the Treaty of Peace and the constitution of August 1919 formed one work in two volumes.† The constitution never shook off its associations, and the fact that such association must be inevitable was the best of all reasons for postponing it, although one must admit that the reason was not so obvious then as it is now. But the fact remains that, as a result of that most luckless

* It is interesting to note that with the Weimar constitution consigned to the dustbin, German governments were as far as ever from being strong; and for the same reason, personal lack of character and experience.

† That distinguished historian, Hermann Goering (p. 37), says: "The Marxist-Democratic National Assembly of Weimar was not ashamed to make the Versailles Treaty the foundation of the new German constitution."

of all possible associations, far more luckless than the fact that Marxists were at the head of the constitution-making cabinet or that the brilliant and patriotic Preuss was a Jew, the fight against the peace settlement to many was impossible without a fight against the constitution.

That aspect was very prominent in the election (November 1922), the account of which was interrupted by these scattered remarks on subjects to which return will have to be made later. The fight at the polls inevitably reduced itself to one on a vote of confidence in the coalition cabinet, that is to say a vote approving the constitution, approving the signature of the treaty, approving the action of the government against rebellion. Ultimately the fight was one of persons and not of principles. There were far too many people with a definite score to pay off against the government, and the enthusiasts for payment won a great and very nearly a decisive victory which would have been decisive had the payers all had the same score to pay. The vote of no-confidence was well carried. The three government parties lost one hundred and six seats and their majority.* The Right parties won eighty-four, and while the Majority Socialists lost fifty-one seats, the Independents won sixty-one. That under the system of mathematically exact proportional representation the result should have been so decisive shows the extent to which there had been a turnover of votes. If there had been a straight vote the majority parties would have been wiped out and that might not have been nearly so disastrous for the Republic as it seemed then; the Right would have been compelled to assume responsibility for government under the shadow of foreign domination, and it might have taught it a useful lesson.

The meaning of the election was clear. The conduct of foreign policy by the democratic government had been disapproved by the Right and the conduct of domestic policy had been disapproved by the Left. The latter verdict was much the more serious. With Allied bayonets on the Rhine the reaction was more or less impotent; the utmost it could have achieved was the breakup of

* The Democrat poll fell, while particularism split the Centrum, the Bavarian Centrists fighting as a separate party (*v. note on p. 134*).

the Reich, and a real victory for factious separatism would have wrecked the reaction for a generation. That is probably what would have happened had the Right parties gained an independent majority and been unable to get rid of their hotheads. But they had no majority. They could and would always be outvoted by the combination of the Left and Centre, for the Independents were not yet arrived at that high state of political consciousness which enables an extreme Left to vote regularly with an extreme Right. But what did matter was the utter weakening of the Socialist Left. As has been said before, the one solid basis in the circumstances for democracy in Germany was a strong united Socialist party. The creation of such a basis was now further off than ever; the less solid basis of at least one strong Socialist party had been completely shattered.

The government resigned; it could do nothing else. Unfortunately the coalition could not resign. The one result of the election that mattered from the parliamentary point of view was that no conceivable coalition could get a majority, and that neither a Right nor a Left cabinet would be tolerated. What had to be found therefore was a government that would not be supported by a definite majority, but would be tolerated by an indefinite one. Its length of office would depend solely on how long it could play off the Left against the Right. In the circumstances parliamentary government ceased almost to function, and it was in these conditions that a series of cabinets—to whom no prestige of inevitability attached, who were quite incapable of imposing their will on the Reichstag, much less on the nation—had to meet a series of international crises which would have taxed the powers of the strongest possible cabinet in Germany backed by the strongest possible national majority.

The issue was inevitably the fulfilment of the Peace Treaty. Looking back it is easy to see that there were only two policies which could be based on the one abiding fact that the treaty was impossible of national acceptance. The one was to secure amendment by loyal fulfilment, using every endeavour to make capital out of Allied divisions; for that the conditions were almost dictatorial authority at home conceded by the nation and a very high

degree not merely of diplomatic skill but of real statesmanlike honesty of purpose. The other was to force the Allies to concessions by a steady policy of obstructionism in fulfilment and in general international relations, trusting to win by defiance what would not be gained by co-operation; for that there was equally needed a strong national government and a will to sacrifice quite as great as that demanded by a policy of fulfilment. The one was a statesman's policy, the other a gambler's; but either might have given better results than having no policy at all.

There is no space to record the peripeties of the obscure struggle that went on between the factions in Germany and between Germany and the Allies, nor the failure of cabinet after cabinet; it must suffice to record the leading features of a period of which an exhaustive study such as is not yet available would be highly instructive if only to show how a government which can exercise neither influence abroad nor control at home may yet accomplish legislative achievement. The defeat of the Socialists made a Socialist chancellor impossible and the successor to the last three-party coalition cabinet was a two-party cabinet under a Centrum leader, the next two being equally headed by a Centrum politician. None, whatever its composition, possessed a majority. When one after the other they had fallen, in every case on a foreign political issue confused with a home political issue, the President tried the experiment of a cabinet of experts with the support of the People's party, the Democrats, and the Centrum, which was the least efficient cabinet of all and whose record, even in a nation where the expert has all that reverence to which he is so little entitled, ought to have preserved political life for ever from the devastations of the so-called non-party expert. The difficulties of the statesmen were obvious. Capable politicians like the Centrum leader Wirth, who was chancellor twice from June 1921 to November 1922, saw very plainly that the only chance of settlement of the foreign political issues was to come to a working agreement with the Allies on a basis of temporary equality which meant fulfilment of the treaty on the basis of a guarantee against any attempt to invoke force or even diplomatic pressure until the outstanding questions were settled. It must not be forgotten that

the total sum of reparations had not yet been fixed* nor the frontier with Poland settled. Every attempt to reach some agreement was sabotaged by the Right or by ill-judged tactics on the part of amateur diplomatists. At almost any moment clever diplomacy left to itself could have extracted something from the divisions among the Allies. The quarrel between Poincaré and Lloyd George which culminated at the Genoa Conference fiasco (April 1922) was a heaven-sent opportunity which was flung away because the very able but curiously mystical and unrealistic Rathenau thought fit to embark on negotiations with Soviet Russia which may have gratified Germany by the sham proof it afforded of Germany's power to conduct an independent foreign policy but led to fatal complications with the Allies. In the matter of fulfilment, on the other hand, Rathenau's agreement with Loucheur (negotiated June–October 1921) was a model of its kind in the matter of reparations, but this was precisely the time when the cabinet failed to act against that regular recruiting of irregular forces which was obviously a breach of the treaty. In Upper Silesia, where, as a sequel to their defeat in the plebiscite, the Poles had started an insurrection (May 1921), the Allies permitted—or rather the French permitted—the Polish government to conduct war on German soil. Here was a clear case for an appeal to an international tribunal, but no appeal was made. Yet the government did not prevent a steady invasion of Silesia by the Freikorps, who conducted a regular campaign against the Poles and incidentally gave them a handsome beating at the storm of the Annaberg. In face of public opinion, the cabinet could hardly interfere as the Allies bade it do, yet it interfered just enough to give the nation the impression that it was loading the dice against German patriotism. None of the cabinets succeeded in convincing either the Allies that it was honest or the nation that it was German.

It was not indeed the statesmen's fault; they were in an impossible position, assailed from every quarter and able to assert themselves in none. The real fault lies with the unpatriotic

* This was the terrible "era of conferences" when Germany was little more than an object of policy.

stupidity of the Right. Unless they were prepared for further occupation of German territory they should have controlled their hotheads and in their own interests asserted the authority of the central government. They did the very reverse. Secure in their irresponsibility, they devoted their whole energy to ruining every conceivable chance of gaining anything for their country. In Prussia, where there was still a strong Left government, they were reasonably harmless. They concentrated all their strength in Bavaria, where a reactionary government was in power devoted to the old Bavarian reigning house and bitterly anti-Prussian. Here under official patronage the Freikorps concentrated. At one time it was estimated that in Bavaria alone there were over three hundred thousand men under arms. It was impossible for a weak central government to coerce these. Not merely would it have been defeated at once in parliament, but there were no forces on which it could depend. The Prussian police were needed in Prussia and the Reichswehr was, according to its leaders, for use against the foreign foe only. There was much to be said for Seeckt's policy of refusing to intervene in internal affairs or in the coercion of a federal state; it might have meant civil war, though one does not, after close study, believe that it would. The unemotional soldier who led the Reichswehr had laid it down at the time of the Kapp "putsch" that it was impossible for the Reichswehr to fire on its wartime comrades, that is to say the Reichswehr felt that it could not shoot on the Freikorps; it is curious to note that it never failed to shoot on the Red Guards among whom there were more ex-soldiers than in any Freikorps after 1921 and among whom were numbers of the best of the first Freikorps members who had fought in Poland and the Baltic States. What Seeckt meant was that he could not issue orders which might involve action against any "national" movement; as between the cabinets and the insurgents the forces of the government would maintain strict neutrality. The position was quite impossible; the surprising thing is that Germany found so many men of goodwill to try and do the impossible.

As the position developed, the situation became intolerable even for men of goodwill. On the one hand the Allies, entirely

dominated by Poincaré, redoubled their insistences. It seems impossible to believe that a statesman with an almost galling sense of reality like Poincaré should have ever thought for a moment that any capacity to pay or to fulfil should be found in this Germany of confusion. It is impossible to resist the impression that he had no such thought, but on the contrary, merely desired to see that confusion was worse confounded; if France could not get the Rhine, the next best thing seemed to be the perpetuation of chaos to the east of it. It was a risky policy, but in the light of what happened in 1919 and subsequently it promised results; Germany got into such chaos that she was within an act of separating into her component parts. In enumerating the forces that destroyed the Republic, the Poincaré policy must not be overlooked; it was in some ways a decisive force.

On the other hand, the Right opposition constantly took graver shape. Out of the Freikorps grew subversive parties which combined extreme reactionary views with extreme Bolshevik ones and called themselves the prophets of the new Germany. They were the nucleus of a much more formidable movement than the official Right, but they had neither unity nor leaders and seemed therefore fitting instruments for the dirtier work of politics who could be disowned at will. Out of them in turn developed secret societies of terrorists which succeeded in outdoing anything the Communists had done or were to do. In Bavaria there was a regular campaign of assassination against Socialist leaders and honest officials, attacks on Allied representatives and any suspected of honourable relations with them. The campaign spread north. Erzberger was murdered in August 1921; Rathenau shot dead ten months later; there was an attempt on Scheidemann; Ebert's life was threatened and, most curious symptom of all, the vendetta was declared against Seeckt because forsooth that "treacherous mercenary" had not at the behest of the Freikorps marched the whole Reichswehr into Silesia and, on his own responsibility, declared war again on twenty nations. It is almost incredible that the Right should have been either so stupid or so conscienceless as to shake hands cheerfully with murder, but it did; it was fortunate for Germany that Seeckt, a soldier and not a politician, was

more sensitive; fortunate too that on the whole the officers' corps of the Reichswehr was mainly composed of gentlemen. After Erzberger's murder the government sought fuller powers to deal with the murder gangs and got them, after a savage opposition from the Right, only to be faced with a Bavarian threat of separation (September 1921). The difficulty was solved by a compromise and for answer the total of outrages mounted more swiftly. Once again the government had to ask for still more powers and got them, but the decision of the Allies to partition Upper Silesia (October 1921) after the German victory in the plebiscite and in the field over the Poles, after the attacks by Polish troops on Allied forces, and abundant evidence that partition was of all solutions the worst, made it impossible for them to be used. The nation was recovering from its stupor and extremely sensitive to indignity; no cabinet would have dared to arrest the heroes of the Annaberg even if they murdered every prominent politician in Germany.* If Poincaré wanted chaos he was certainly obtaining it, for by the middle of 1922 things were at a complete deadlock politically, economically, and diplomatically. Germany was on the eve of further occupation because fulfilment of the Allied demands was impossible, not in themselves, but because there was no power in Germany to enforce fulfilment. The German currency had gone to pieces; the economic life was in complete disorganization; the financial system was in disarray and from every quarter forces of sinister selfishness, among whom were bearers of honoured names, swooped like carrion birds on a dying Germany. It became clear that there were only two alternatives, a complete change in the attitude of the Allied powers, no easy thing when Europe and most of the world was still in confusion, or a resort on the part of the Allies to force. The presence of Poincaré decided the issue. Taking advantage of a technical default, Poincaré declared Germany's non-fulfilment criminal and unable to be overlooked and marched French troops into the Ruhr. That was in January 1923.

* That was left to Hitler. Among the June 30 (1934) victims was Hans Peter von Heyderbreck, head of the famous Freikorps that bore his name, for finding the Leader inadequate as a saviour.

CHAPTER III

THE ACHIEVEMENT OF STRESEMAN

THE "Ruhr War" is rightly regarded as a turning point in the first period of the Republic's history. For the first time in the confused quarrel between the Allies and the German people a concrete issue was presented to the latter, for the invasion of the Ruhr was a frank appeal to force and could with a great deal of justice be maintained to be a violation of the Versailles Treaty. It broke up the solidarity of the Allies and once again left France face to face with Germany. It was *de facto*, if not *de jure*, a return to war. In resistance to what was aggression the German nation found courage again; it was able to answer a call to unity in a supreme effort of national defence and that alone restored to the nation at large much of its lost faith in itself. In that war Germany might not be able to win; she was thrilled to find she could fight.

The difficulty before the Cuno cabinet—the famous cabinet of experts by which Ebert had proclaimed his faith in the bankruptcy of the party system—was no light one. As a party of experts all of whom were experts in other fields than that of government, it did not enjoy the confidence of the nation. It could not lead, it had to follow, and a government that begins by following is rarely capable of sound subsequent leadership. It was plain to it that Germany meant to fight. Armed resistance was out of the question; it would not have been backed by a united nation and it would, in spite of those hotheads who sought to stampede the country into it, have been fatal for Germany. A regular campaign would have been over in a month; the Treaty of Versailles would have returned to the melting pot, and Germany would probably have been even more mutilated than she had been. On the other hand dignified protest and the tremendous opportunity afforded of using the almost definite rupture between the Allies, a slow game demanding great patience, forbearance and the will to sacrifice, but offering valuable results, was equally impossible. The nation would have refused to endorse a policy, even if there

had been no irresponsibles to incite it, which it would have felt instinctively to be a policy of impotent surrender. It is questionable if even a Bismarck without the absolutely trustworthy backing of an army could have forced it upon Germany. The Cuno cabinet therefore improved on the famous choice between two evils; it chose a third one, and with the unanimous and almost passionate support of the people proclaimed passive resistance in the Ruhr which, it announced, would be supported to the last limit of the national resources. That was deceiving the nation for, apart altogether from the fact that these resources were feeble in the extreme, they could not use the last resource; that was already barred to them. But the risk of the consequences of that deceit had to be taken; with the decision as announced neither Nationalists nor Socialists could well quarrel, and after all the fact that neither the government nor the nation could make good the proud words of the defiance was immaterial if the end meant a recovery of the national spirit.

Whether any persons in responsible positions in Germany ever really believed that they could be made good is very doubtful. In a mere struggle to see which side could hold out long enough the Germans were heavily handicapped. The victory to be gained was only the negative one of being the last to persist in a struggle that could bring no advantage to either side, but even that would be a victory. The immediate gain was an assertion of the existence of a national unity such as had seemed to have vanished altogether. There was no more question of sabotage and quarrel in the front line; in the Ruhr Communists were as determined in their resistance as Freikorps men. But once again it was found impossible in the absence of leaders to create a political unity which would correspond to the national unity. All through a period of extreme crisis the cabinet was perpetually at the mercy of a snap vote in parliament. Party feud rose ever higher thanks to the provocative tactics of the Nationalists and their extremist allies who sought consistently to make party capital out of the resistance or to goad the government into action, the responsibility for which there was no possibility of bringing home to them, action which from the diplomatic point of view was undesirable and from the practical

point of view was not merely profitless but dangerous. In Bavaria the activity of the murder gangs and their associates rose to a hitherto unknown pitch; it became positively dangerous to be a reasonably sensible being in Munich. They poured their agents into the Ruhr, most of them undesirables for one good reason or another, where they proceeded to transform a passive resistance into that sort of active one of sabotage and manslaughter which is peculiar to murder gangs. At their headquarters nationalism almost ceased to be German and the anti-republican movement went not far short of sheer separatism. If the downfall came—and the gangs were doing their utmost to make it certain—Bavaria would declare herself independent. Nor would she even now remain in the Reich except on her own terms. Cuno very laudably sought to give expression to the national unity by broadening the basis of his cabinet to make it a government of national concentration. The Nationalists would neither enter it themselves nor let others; when it became known that the Socialists were willing to join the cabinet, there came a frank threat of secession from Munich. Her less particularist spirits talked openly of setting up a new Reich of their own by a crusade of the Christians of Bavaria—including all those adhering to Wotanism—against the Jewish republic of Weimar and putting Bavaria at the head of a new monarchist federation by a “march on Berlin.” There had not so long ago been a “march on Rome,” and imitativeness is as characteristic of reactionary extremists as it is of their nearest and equally irresponsible kin.

That there was not the slightest chance of success while there were still Prussian officers in command of troops that, Jewish republic or no Jewish republic, were proud to call themselves Prussian, and that the extremists would only have provoked a most unequal civil war, had a restraining influence on the less irresponsible among the Nationalist leaders who were a little tired of the harping on the superior merits of Bavaria; and as, without somebody reasonably responsible at its head, the movement could never become more than a riot the cabinet need not have been so thoroughly alarmed. But it dared not put the extremists to the test; it dared not coerce a federal state although such states

were abolished by the constitution and so had to struggle along against factious opposition and dangerous conspiracy. The wildness that seemed to be raging in Munich had, as it was bound to have, its effect on the other side; both in Thuringia and Saxony all the Left parties began to close their ranks, a warning sign of a possible future development. In the Rhineland itself, cowed under the Allied occupation, legal and illegal, there were soon visible ominous signs of defeatism. The separation of "Rhineland republics" under French protection was indeed frustrated by the utter despicability of the tools selected by the French authorities—a very nasty page of French policy—and by the sturdy resistance of a patriotic population. But what in the long run was more dangerous was the spread of despair among the responsible leaders in the Rhineland and their toying with a solution of the crisis on the Rhine by a temporary separation of the Rhineland from the Reich. The men who toyed with it were neither hirelings nor extremists, but sober patriotic Germans some of whom were to play conspicuous parts in subsequent history.

To the political confusion was added economic chaos. Earlier cabinets had already at the behest of big business trifled with inflation to the ruin of thousands of the middle class. It was the easiest way out of the impasse caused by the havoc which the occupation and the passive resistance combined to play with both industry and the national finances. The government's one remedy for everything was to issue more and yet more notes—it was said bitterly that in the spring of 1923 the only overtime worked in Germany was in the government printing shops—and the value of the mark to sterling soon could only be expressed in "astronomical figures" beyond the comprehension of anyone but an addict of the higher mathematics. A united nation with sound finances and capable of profitable production might just have carried passive resistance through. For a disunited bankrupt nation it was impossible. The aid given by the mother country was not inconsiderable, but the Ruhr had really to hold out by its own unaided strength of endurance. The rank and file of the population did hold out—the workers, the shopkeepers, the parsons, the old age pensioners; the heart of big business failed

it in the end. The stomachs of miners could hold out, but not the balance sheets of the mineowners, many of whom are now among the leading patriots of the "Third Reich." That they were right in believing the struggle was hopeless, that, having lost much and endured a lot, they took the realist view may be admitted. The charge against them is much more than that of being realists in an hour far too serious for what financial interests mean by realism. It was they and their party who had waved all the banners of idealism and forced the declaration of passive resistance; it was they and their party who had threatened with the penalty for treason any government which dared to abandon it, and now their individual members were in the Rhineland making separate terms with the French and in Germany were netting huge profits from the utter misery of unrestricted inflation. The resistance of the working and lower middle-classes in the Ruhr, a resistance of hungry abandoned men with starving children at their knees, is one of the finest pages in the history of the Republic. If it was right, abundantly right, to clap into a felon's cell those agitators who on behalf of the workers strove to get the struggle ended, the only just end to those private bargainers and bloodsucking profiteers was a stone wall and a firing party. There were many cowards in Germany, many self-seekers who were all alike unworthy to be fellow-citizens of the common men of the Ruhr, but there was only one utterly contemptible class in the land and that was the class which subsequently earned the further infamy of becoming the paymasters of the National Socialist party.

Eventually, the distress now beginning to be universally felt became too great. The measures of the cabinet were altogether inadequate, produced more distress than they relieved and rapidly ended in crisis. The mutterings of revolt became so ominous that they reached ears long attuned only to the noisy clamour of Munich. The Socialist leaders had to take notice; they soon realized that if they failed to take action the barricades would be up in the streets. The cabinet dared not call resistance off, dared not make efforts to equalize the sacrifice. Hasty negotiations made it clear that it was possible to obtain a broader basis for

a coalition, but not under the actual chancellor. Hasty negotiations showed that, France apart, the Allies would welcome a strong government with a policy. The cabinet hesitated and left the way free for the first great man to step upon the republican stage, Gustav Stresemann.

Stresemann was then forty-five. The son of a Berlin beerhouse owner and the possessor of a good degree from Berlin University for a thesis on the development of the bottled beer industry in the German capital, he preferred a business to an academic career and took a post as assistant manager of a small chocolate-making concern in Saxony. His abilities attracted notice, no less than his insistence on organization and combination, and when as a result of his efforts the Dresden manufacturers combined to form a trade association he became its secretary, finally becoming secretary to the powerful Union of Saxon Manufacturers, a creation largely due to his enthusiasm and skill in negotiation. From his university days a Liberal of the old romantic type whose idealism went back to the fiasco of the Frankfurt parliament, and at the same time an ebullient German patriot who instinctively paid homage to the achievement of the empire, he had strong political ambitions of a type not over common in pre-war Germany. He was untainted with the heresies of the threefold state and the economic parliament, but he wanted a co-operation between German industry and the German ruling class. All his life indeed he strove for one synthesis after another. As the obscure assistant manager he strove for co-operation between the worker and the employer, as the secretary of the Union for co-operation between the members of industry, now he strove for co-operation between industry and the state in the spirit of co-partnership in a common purpose. He met with some nasty rebuffs before he established his position in the upper middle-class industrialist party of the National Liberals but survived them all, and by sheer force of personality rose in it as the representative of a younger and more virile Liberalism of the German type until on the death, during the war, of its great leader Bassermann he was unanimously elected to the leadership of the party. He owed his success at once to his ability

to handle men without acquiring the reputation of being an intriguer, and to his patent honesty. He was not always in the same place, for he had a quite Emersonian dislike of stupidity masking as consistency, but no one was ever left in any doubt where he was.

Had the war not intervened, it is possible that sooner or later he would have become a member of an Imperial government, but the course of the war settled that issue. To his romantic temperament the war made an overwhelming appeal; he saw it as a great crusade of Germanism against jealous enemies, a crusade which asked of the individual total and willing sacrifice. From being a somewhat academic critic of the regime he became its strong and eloquent supporter in the conviction that it had achieved that supreme synthesis which is called national unity, that unity which in one form or another has been the perpetual dream of German statesmanship. He asked of the government only that it should lead; when it refused to lead he supported the army command, strove for an "integral peace," voted against the peace resolution and in favour of the annexationist treaty of Brest, and so when the crash came found himself left out of the first parliamentary cabinet as a reactionary and even out of the new Democratic party. Defeat and revolution knocked away what had been hitherto the very bases of his life, and in November 1918 he seemed a discredited despairing politician without a future.

It was the very magnitude of the blow that saved him. Flung suddenly on his own resources, politically reduced to a Crusoe, he reacted vigorously from the disillusion and dismay that had threatened to crush him, and by his own effort got together a party which he called the People's party, a party of his own, which, although it was still in a state of formation and lacked at once money and appeal, managed to secure 4.4 per cent of the votes to the Constituent Assembly.

In the new parliament he was a very little man indeed. It was fortunate that he was. Regarded by the victorious democracy as a discredited reactionary, he could exercise very little influence beyond that of an eloquent speaker. He was not called upon to

take great decisions and so he had time to be an onlooker, time to think, time to plan. Had he been as powerful a figure as in 1917 he would probably have irretrievably committed himself, for he was not unnaturally violently opposed to the Democratic party for personal reasons, and in general took the Nationalist and even the extreme Nationalist view. He would have sunk to the level of a Nationalist politician in a party which would have had even less use for him fundamentally than it had for the less able but much more influential Hugenberg. For him the first three years of the Republic were the wilderness, that wilderness which kills the weak but makes stronger the strong. During these years he worked out a peculiar synthesis of his own, a synthesis between his realism and his romanticism. All his instincts called on him to denounce the Peace Treaty and support every effort to wreck it, to favour the policy of Scapa Flow rather than the policy of rehabilitation by surrender. His intelligence told him that for nations, if not for individuals, there is no after life for the suicide and that if Germany was to avoid destruction it must bow before the tempest. The one important thing was that it should go on living. While cabinets were falling and the nation stood perpetually on the brink of a chaos to fall into which would have meant bloody civil and foreign war, he was making the political synthesis that none of his contemporaries were capable of making. Meantime his restraint and his moderation were conquering mistrust. He stood apart from the plots of the Right; if not enthusiastic for the Weimar constitution he was loyal to it, the more loyal as he took the measure of the Right and their treasonable reckless plottings, and realized that in the Weimar charter there was a basis on which a great democratic state could be constructed. He was critical, often bitterly critical, of the first republican cabinets, but he was fair in his bitterness and within the limits of the situation constructive. By the time the Weimar coalition had finally split, the democratic parties had come to regard him with less suspicion, with a new respect if not with cordiality. He was no longer regarded as a Right politician but as leader of a right wing of the bourgeois centre. His party was represented in more than one cabinet but had steadily refused

to co-operate with the Socialists. He himself had refused to accept office, the measure of his realism, and as a result had increased his prestige and conquered confidence. As yet untried in office he was regarded as a strong man, a phrase which no one as yet had thought particularly applicable to any of the chancellors of the post-war period.

His strength lay in the fact that, without ceasing to be a romantic he had become practical, realist only in the sense that he had brought a vivid imagination under control. As a politician he knew he had to work in the present; as a statesman he realized that the present only exists as a minute fraction of time between a past and a future. He proposed to summon strength from the past to mould the future in what present time allowed him. His record was clean, a record of patriotism whose only fault was that it had been on occasion too ebullient and drowned common sense in mental exaltation. But the years in the wilderness had been years of discipline. He was no less susceptible to the influence of an idea, but he had learned how to keep it from being overmastering. He had given hostages to no particular creed or nostrum; he was almost the only free statesman in Germany.

In the wilderness he had recovered from the moral blow of defeat and surrender, recovered to such an extent as to be able to look facts in the face. He passed the post-war policies through the sieve of fierce and honest criticism and came to the conclusion that such a thing as a policy in the true sense of the word was non-existent. In the wilderness he worked out his own policy. He began from the basic fact which was already being forgotten that Germany had deliberately chosen surrender to annihilation, and had preferred to sign the Peace Treaty rather than appeal again to arms. That being so there were but two alternatives, either to repudiate the surrender and the signature and take the consequences, or frame the national policy within the limits laid down by the Versailles settlement. Four years had passed since it was made, four years of almost universal criticism. Its imperfections were admitted; its sacrosanctity save by the formalist no longer upheld. It was not indeed admitted to be a settlement incapable of fulfilment, and it always was capable of

fulfilment, but it was now admitted that it was an impossible foundation for the new Europe. That profound current of condemnatory opinion German statesmanship had singularly failed to use because it had never devised anything more than a hand-to-mouth policy of avoiding the immediate evil and had allowed excitable elements in the state to make its use impossible. There had hardly ever been a time when Germany had a clear case for negotiation and revision, but it had been ruined by ill-considered action on the part of sections for whom the government were nominally responsible. So long as the Right claimed the privilege of pursuing a policy of their own and disowning all responsibility for it to home or foreign opinion, so long was it quite impossible for a German government to confront Germany's enemies with a German policy. Every party, every statesman, every politician even, and not a few laymen, had a policy of sorts, but nowhere was there a German policy because there never had been a government that could or would speak for Germany, that is the sober majority of German citizens. His own policy was a German policy and consisted first and foremost in what sounds obvious, but was in the circumstances nearly impossible, the simple formula that the business of a government is to govern. There must be only one policy in Germany, and not only must the unofficial policies go but their authors must be restrained by law from trying to carry them out. The first essential was to show the Allies that Germany had a government which could do what it said it would do.

What it would do was a different matter. He had made up his own mind that there was only one possible solution of the Ruhr difficulty and that was to renounce the whole policy of resistance. No half-measures would suffice. The Ruhr was an open sore from which Germany's life blood was draining, and in which sinister and selfish interests were wallowing like devouring maggots. He proposed, if he were called upon, to form a government on the basis of surrender, the boldest step that any republican statesman ever took, a decision that he knew might very well be equivalent to signing his own death warrant. He proposed, if he had a parliamentary majority, to impose that basis by force on recal-

citrant elements. After that there was the necessary restoration of the finances and resumption of ordinary economic activity, again to be forced on any obstructive minority. And then, after that, the real policy would have its chance, for unless surrender and financial rehabilitation were merely clearing of the ground they would be in vain. The situation created by these measures would be both difficult and dangerous; if it could not be used politically chaos would result. Having shown his power he proposed to abandon the silly ineffective policy of partial fulfilment and the permission of partial resistance, of chicanery, compromise, and helplessness for a straightforward policy of fulfilment, a policy which if it would not be comprehensible to all Germans, would, at least, be understood by Allied statesmen. He did not propose indeed to fulfil the *ipsissima verba* of the Versailles Treaty because from the *ipsissima verba* clarity and definiteness were lacking. He proposed to ask the Allies what they wanted now and, having accepted a basis of international agreement, make it the basis of German policy. It was not surrender in the widest sense though it began with a surrender, for he had grasped the truth that had chased elusively through the minds of several of his predecessors that a policy of fulfilment skilfully carried out was in effect a policy of revision. He did not stress that aspect of it; he presented to his countrymen definite issues based on a formula that was not rigid but something living, something capable of infinite evolution as it was carried out along an indefinite path to a definite goal, the restoration of Germany to her rightful place among the peoples of the world.

It was that policy which he outlined now to his countrymen caring little whether they understood all its implications or not. He stood practically alone with no assets but clear conviction and indomitable courage. Fortune as it always does favoured the bold. Almost without his asking for it, the parties rallied to him on the basis suggested. He could not bend the Nationalists; they were too busy riding the hobby horse of their own vanity to the crash their frivolity had earned, but the Socialists, separated from him by a much more formidable gulf, gave him a support on which he can hardly have counted. They entered his cabinet

which represented the whole nation except for the two anti-constitutionalist wings. Republican Germany had at last a republican government that could be—and was—master in its own house because it wanted to be. Both the Communists and the Nationalists threatened civil war, the threat that had so terrified his predecessors who dared tackle neither. Stresemann had made up his mind to tackle both if necessary, and confident in the armed forces—then under a singularly able group of officers who had made up their minds at last that the duty of a national force is to support the legal government of the day, and that a national force must not be sacrificed as a national force to the stupidities of any politicians however “national”—was prepared to use all the forces of the state against them.

With assurances of support such as his predecessors had not obtained and with a confidence in himself such as had not been seen since Ludendorff's nerves gave way, Stresemann took office (August 13, 1923). He called off passive resistance and declared a state of siege which meant in practice that the commanders of the Reichswehr divisions were responsible for the maintenance of order. His authority was immediately challenged. The emergency measures, passed by the government and so approved by the Socialist leaders, were a splendid weapon to the Communists who had a working-class to work upon already exasperated by privation and alarmed by the ominous progress of the Right extremists in the direction of a *coup d'état*. On the frontiers of Bavaria a state of civil war was already in existence. To the south the Freikorps were assembling and openly announcing their intention of cleaning up the “Jewish-Marxist north”; immediately opposite them in Saxony and Thuringia the working-class was organizing to oppose invasion. In Saxony, Socialists and Communists had combined to form a government which was proceeding to arm the workers when Stresemann struck. On the pretext that the government of Saxony was about to proclaim a Soviet republic he marched in regular troops which dispersed hostile demonstrations with casualties, ejected the cabinet and placed Saxony under a Reich commissioner. Geography no doubt dictated the priority of an attack on Saxony, but there was the

obvious inclination to regard the extreme Left as something more fundamentally dangerous to the Republic than the extreme Right—a clear case of a wish being father to erroneous thought—and the whole proceeding was of extremely dubious legality. But it was effective and except for sporadic street outbreaks, ill-conceived as usual and badly organized, in some of the industrial areas—the Ruhr mercifully was under French bayonets—there was no further trouble from that wing of the extremists.

The other wing was a more delicate business. But the government had one advantage; the peculiar brand of Bavarian particularism professed by the extremist leaders had ended by at once irritating and alarming Prussian nationalism and Bavaria was isolated. That Stresemann was prepared to deal faithfully with the murder gangs who were openly threatening to send him to join Erzberger and Rathenau need not be doubted, but it was fortunate that faithful dealing was rendered unnecessary. Left to its own devices the Bavarian reaction proceeded to make itself immeasurably ridiculous. Only by steady concession at the risk of direct intervention by the Allies had the central government succeeded in keeping the illegal arming of Bavaria from wrecking the Reich. Now that concession was at an end, the Bavarian government, extremist and particularist, resolved on defiance. Without formally seceding, it announced that it could not accept the government's emergency measures; it refused to admit Reich interference but appointed a commissioner for itself, the monarchist leader Kahr, and made the Seventh Reichswehr division, the Bavarian division, swear allegiance to the new regime. Its General, Lossow, who thus rendered himself liable to a court martial, refused to take orders from his superiors in Berlin and all relations with the Central government were broken off. Stresemann responded by moving troops to the Thuringian border; they never needed to go any farther.

The particularism and monarchism of the Kahr-Lossow faction which was believed to be acting with the full approval of the ex Crown Prince Rupprecht, one of the very few of the ex-princes who had retained a not undeserved popularity, was anything but

popular with the leaders of the murder gangs. After long efforts to reconcile personal ambitions, the extremist factions had coalesced into a "German Fighting Front," the political leadership of which was entrusted to the leading orator of a small extremist political party, the National Socialist Workers' party, scarcely heard of outside Munich. The son of a minor Austrian official, Adolf Hitler had emigrated to Munich before the war where he earned a precarious living by drawing and designing and manual work. Self-educated, uneducated, conceited, filled with the unreasoning prejudice of the bourgeois class from which poverty had forced him, he hated the milieu to which he had been reduced, hated the class-conscious elements in it, and hated even more, with all the cheap hatred of the *déclassé*, the smug, comfortable citizens of whose society he had been deprived. His untrained mind was chock-full of café philosophies and irrational prejudices of which only one was not completely derivative, that vicious anti-Semitism which in Germany is traditionally associated with the commercially unsuccessful, a prejudice elevated into a creed by intensive reading of anti-Semitic literature. In the war he had volunteered at once with the exaggerated German patriotism of the non-German, had served in a Bavarian regiment, had been twice wounded, had attained the rank of corporal and the Iron Cross, and after demobilization had found himself at once unable to settle down to civilian life and to get employment. The army had been the first milieu in which he had felt at home, and the volunteer became and remained more the soldier than any regular. In his own mind he incarnated a military and a German ideal, and therefore found the German military defeat inexplicable except as a result of treachery. His previous reading had indicated that there is and can be only one source of treachery and treason in Germany—the Jews and the Marxists—and his early hatred of both rose to the pitch of monomania in which a familiar form of obsession was curiously mingled with personal ambition. With the singlemindedness that characterizes the monomaniac he resolved to save Germany by ruling her. He eagerly joined up with the extremists, but subordination in the ranks was no longer to his mind and he found final home in a tiny little organization,

the German Workers' party founded by a few enthusiasts, mostly middle class *déclassés* like himself.

The aims of its founders were to attract the deluded workers from Marxist—*lege* Jewish—Socialism and the anti-national elements of which it was the agency, and head a revolt of poor honest Germans against the enemies of society—the Jews in their double rôle of Socialists and capitalists. An emotional and forceful speaker of salvationist fervour, he attracted some attention; the party gathered adherents; he acquired control of it and turned it into the National Socialist Workers' party which was soon very favourably taken notice of by the military leaders of the irregulars, who realized the necessity of heady oratory in keeping the spirits of their members at concert pitch. Outside Munich no one paid any particular attention to the party, but in Munich its leader was known as an orator who could be relied upon to denounce anything and everything connected with the government in Berlin, a city which was gradually coming to mean, in the minds of the more youthful enthusiasts of the Freikorps, a cesspool of vice and corruption far murkier and more mephitic than the narrowest Victorian puritan's conception of Paris. He was particularly acceptable to those Freikorps leaders who were not particularists and had no vision of a local Wittelsbach restoration, whose dreams rose to their own conquest of Germany, to its complete reorganization on Freikorps lines and to an ultimate Armageddon of revenge and victory under their leadership, to whom the most fatuous of the patriotic songs of Germany were inspired anticipations of a tremendous future, and who had already forgotten that the real soldiers of 1914–1918 had long ago contemptuously dismissed their neurotic rhetoric as *Lissauerei*.*

For two years their excitement had been growing with their murderous activity, for two years Hitler's chauvinism had kept pace with it. The cringing to the Allies, the partition of Silesia, the inevitable brutalities of the occupation, and finally the occupation of the Ruhr; each marked a rise in his emotional tem-

* For the benefit of younger readers, Ernst Lissauer was the author of the "Hymn of Hate," which did not prevent him being a very considerable minor poet.

perature and meditation on them and, still more, constant oratory on them ended by upsetting completely a none too stable mental balance. When the breach came between Berlin and Bavaria he saw himself faced with one of those historic moments of which all fanatics dream. He realized that the Kahrs and the Lossows were just little local conspirators playing a little local game; he resolved by a bold individual stroke to force them to co-operate in the great game. With the promise of support from many of the members of the "German Fighting Front," including his early patron, Captain Roehm, he organized a picked cutting-out force, forced his way into a monarchist meeting at which Kahr was speaking, theatrically fired off a revolver at the roof and at the point of the smoking weapon forced Kahr and Lossow to pledge their support. He then declared himself President of the German Reich and as such appointed the pathetic Ludendorff—his fine brain already giving way—military dictator, and ordered preparations for a march on Berlin such as would make Mussolini's march on Rome—the approved model for revolutionary reaction—a thing of minor significance. But Kahr and Lossow had no intention of risking the scaffold for an adventurer whom with reason they suspected to be scarcely responsible. On the plea that a forced oath is not binding, they issued very contrary instructions and, when Hitler and Ludendorff sought to occupy Munich, instead of cheering crowds armed police met them. Half a dozen volleys, a dozen casualties, and it was all over. Ludendorff stayed hoping to die by a German bullet, but was tamely arrested; Hitler bolted and was run down a day or two later. The Bavarian rising of the "Ninth of November" was over. There was no need for the Central government to move their troops any farther. The Bavarian reactionaries of all shades had not only had a bad scare, they felt they had made their whole movement ridiculous; they offered no more overt resistance to the exceptional powers. Both the Communist and the Hitlerite parties were declared illegal and Hitler after a long and silly trial disappeared to meditate amid the comforts of the fortress of Landshut on the folly of "illegality." Hitler the rebel had ceased to exist; the heroic period of National Socialism was already over.

Stresemann could now breathe freely; the enemies of the nation were for the moment impotent. The French were still in the Ruhr—they were not finally to leave till August 1924 after the supplier Herriot had succeeded the stern formalist Poincaré—but the Ruhr was no longer a running sore. He took in hand the currency question, and, in spite of opposition and crises, stabilized the mark at the cost of much misery and much loss. The credit for stabilization has been often disputed, but whoever made the technical arrangements, the credit of carrying them through belongs to Stresemann alone. A minor economist could have told the nation how to stabilize; it took a statesman of ruthless courage to force the nation to cut its losses. The fall to the abyss was stoutly arrested; from now onward Germany began the more difficult and infinitely more painful process of ascent. He scored a still greater success in foreign affairs. After much acrimonious discussion among themselves, after a series of humiliating checks, the Allies agreed in principle to a re-examination of the whole question of reparations by experts, who were to be economists and not politicians, in the light of Germany's capacity to pay and her creditors' capacity to absorb. Enthusiastic commentators described the decision as transferring reparations and their undefined burden from the alien sphere of politics to the true sphere of economics. That was nonsense, but politically the step forward was a gigantic one.

After a series of victories brilliantly fought and hard won the Stresemann government went on to its inevitable Waterloo, for notoriously there is never gratitude and there is seldom reflection in politics. At the end of its hundred days of office it had saved Germany at the cost of alienating every party—including the chancellor's own—and every interest. The Socialist leaders alarmed at the disaffection the economic measures were causing among their adherents had already left the government. Now a minority cabinet it was at the mercy of faction. Stresemann was not the type of statesman who will stand eternal wrangling, pettifogging opposition, and multiplicity of combination. Exasperated and exhausted, he asked the Reichstag finally for a definite vote of confidence; the critics dared not refuse so plain

a challenge and Right and Left combined to defeat the government (November 23, 1923).

They hardly dared do otherwise with the country writhing under the sacrifices it was condemned to bear if it was to be saved, and filled with that perversity that makes the invalid swallow the nauseous drug and throw the bottle at the nurse. The defeat was a personal affront to Stresemann, the result of invalid's ill-temper, and although the chancellor was perhaps unduly sensitive to personal affronts he could not but wryly recognize that it was in itself a sign that the invalid was less deadly ill than he had been. There was no crisis. An election was constitutionally due in a few months and so there was only a ministerial re-shuffle. The same minority coalition carried on. Marx of the Centrum, a mild man but an accomplished wirepuller, became chancellor; Stresemann stayed on at the Foreign Office and the Reichstag, satisfied with its cheap revenge, accorded the new cabinet a vote of confidence by a majority greater than that by which it had defeated its predecessor. Early in 1924 the Dawes Committee began to draw up its reparations report.

The election campaign was at its height when the Dawes report appeared. Until then it had been one rather of personalities than of principles, but the report provided a fresh issue or perhaps, rather, a fresh topic. The settlement arrived at was onerous, too onerous, a compromise between political interest and economic reality, but it was neither indefinite nor impossible. It was on the whole much nearer to the German than to the Allied view of what was possible; it certainly was an imposed settlement, but the precedent of imposition by a joint select committee was a clear gain; further revision was not excluded and default not only could not be followed by individual "sanctions," but could, if economically justifiable, be condoned. The report bulked largely in the latter stages of the electoral battle, but it was not a decisive factor in the result for the nation had had no time to digest its contents. The battle was complicated by the unscrupulous use made of it by the Nationalists, but was actually decided by the accumulated and confused hatreds of the past years; the unfortunate thing was that merely on chronological grounds it was

impossible outside Germany to dissociate the report from the result. That result (May 4, 1924) was a great extremist victory which very nearly ruined all hopes of international peace.

The Nationalists with one hundred and six seats were the strongest party in the Reichstag while the Right extremists had thirty-six. The Socialists reaped the fruit of their rank and file's discontents by being reduced to one hundred members, the Communists rising to sixty-three. The total loss of the government parties was forty seats; only the confessional steadiness of the Centrum which came back only four less saved it from complete disaster. It was a bad day for German democracy.

For a moment even Stresemann despaired. On the figures it not only looked as though his policy of fulfilment might never even be submitted to Parliament and that the whole republican system was in danger; the result indicated the growing middle-class dislike and distrust of the Weimar parties and the conviction among increasing circles that the republic had failed rather than that republican governments had failed. The truth was that there had been failure, and in a public quick to appreciate weakness the opinion had gained ground that the Nationalists who had so largely contributed to the failure were the party of the future. The figures showed not so much a revolt of the middle class as its drift to what it conceived to be the winning side. The loss of its votes to the centre parties was not an irretrievable loss, and on the long view the actual gains and losses of the parties meant very little save the fact that the extremist flourishes in proportion as weak government gives him liberty to flourish. But on the short view a political situation of no little difficulty had arisen. There was still a clear majority for the republic, still a majority for the grand coalition. But it was obviously impossible to resuscitate that combination of which Stresemann had made such good use; after so significant a reverse the Socialists were condemned to opposition. The decision lay with the Nationalists who, it must again be emphasized, were a disloyal anti-republican anti-constitutional party, and none the less so because they as a party had not taken to direct unconstitutional action. The cabinet had of course resigned, but the Nationalists had no intention of aban-

doning the position of dictating policy without accepting responsibility. Duly consulted they remembered their dignity so far as to suggest a Nationalist cabinet, but the fact that they put forward as an acceptable nominee for the chancellorship the aged but still malignant Tirpitz, indicated that the suggestion was a mere piece of stagecraft. When it was put to them that a Tirpitz cabinet would not survive the first division in the Reichstag they withdrew in satisfied dudgeon and refused to join a Right coalition for which Stresemann did not judge the time ripe, but which he would have accepted. He knew, however, that it could not be accepted by the Right because any cabinet must either declare acceptance or rejection of the Dawes scheme. Of a cabinet of rejection he could not be a member; of a cabinet of acceptance after their oratorical frenzies of the past days the Nationalist party could not be an integral part. What would have to be tested was whether or no there was in the Reichstag a majority for the report and to make the test Marx and Stresemann resumed office with a minority cabinet.

The second Marx cabinet was for the moment concerned only with international politics. On the Dawes report issue they could count on the hundred Socialist votes, but the majority would be small and could not absolutely be depended upon. They accepted the report on behalf of Germany and proceeded to pass the legislation through the Reichstag by sufficient if not very large majorities, against the votes of the Right and of the Communists. But among that legislation there was one bill which because it involved a modification of the constitution ranked as a constitutional amendment and so required a two-thirds majority of the whole House. If the previous divisions were to be taken as a criterion the bill was bound to be lost; even if the Nationalists only abstained, a two-thirds majority would not be forthcoming. The excitement as the critical division was taken was intense. Right and Left extremists—partners in anti-national action not for the first and not for the last time—voted “No.” The Nationalists now could no longer evade responsibility; their action would mean the acceptance or rejection, with all the consequences of either, of the Dawes report. Of them fifty-four voted “No”; forty-eight voted “Aye.”

The government needed three hundred and eleven votes to carry the bill; they got three hundred and fourteen (August 29, 1924). The Dawes plan was through and once again in the history of the Republic men ate their words because at heart they were better patriots than partisans.

The effect on the nation was very great. If the Nationalist act was bitterly condemned by their own extremists it found an echo in the hearts of the great majority of Germans who are quick to catch the significance of a patriotic action, and who took it for granted that Nationalism had not merely recovered its sense of personal responsibility, but was preparing to assume republican responsibility within the framework of the constitution and prepared already to act at the worst as a constitutional opposition in fact as well as appearance. The Nationalist leaders improved a shining hour by offering to enter the cabinet on terms; the chancellor and Stresemann replied by demanding a national coalition, leaving outside only the pariah twins of extremism, to meet an hour of grave national decisions. But Nationalist patriotism had strict limits; the offers were refused and, greatly daring, the chancellor went to the country.

Going to the country was a novelty in Germany then, and the nation appreciated the fact that it was called upon to approve an historic decision. The election (December 1924), despite the difficulty of the Nationalists in presenting a united opposition front after so glaring a split, was fought with extreme bitterness but without violence. The result as was expected left the party proportions little altered, but plainly indicated a reaction to sanity. The Right extremists lost nearly half their seats, the Nationalists gaining six; the Right had actually lost ground, but it was consolidating and in a direction away from extremism. On the other wing the Socialists again became the largest parliamentary party by winning thirty-one seats, the Communists losing seventeen; the Left, too, was consolidating in the same centripetal way. The Centre parties won eighteen seats and could congratulate themselves on a victory. The result had international and national rather than party political significance. The Dawes plan was endorsed by the electorate; the only losers had been the extremists;

there was a movement, faint indeed but definite, towards republican constitutional consolidation.

The result at once chastened and heartened the Nationalists and made them listen with more seriousness to talks of coalition. Stresemann now judged the time ripe for an effort to bring the Nationalists to the formal acceptance of responsibility. To him the Dawes plan was a mere preliminary, a clearing of the ground for much more important work, and in that work he felt it essential that the Nationalists should co-operate. In the coming negotiations with the Allies he must be able to speak for the nation, and he knew that in the minds of the realistic French the nation meant the Nationalist party. The way out was ingenious. To give the cabinet a majority the Centrum announced that, if a pledge was given that the coming cabinet would maintain both the republican constitution and the foreign policy of its predecessor, it would risk joining a Conservative coalition to enable it to be formed. The pledge was given in undivulged forms; the Centrum leaders duly joined and Hans Luther, non-party man for the moment, shrewd financier, of Nationalist sympathies but a Dawes negotiator, became chancellor of a Centrist-Populist-Nationalist cabinet with Stresemann as foreign minister (January 1925). The confusion of parties seemed to be coming to an end and the process was aided by a still more sensational election which followed hard on the heels of Marx's appeal to the country.

The death of the President of the Republic on February 28, 1925, robbed Germany of one of her most faithful sons. Friedrich Ebert was not a great man, but he was a man for great occasions who was less unfit than he seemed to be a man of destiny. However much his conception of patriotism may be criticized no one can deny that the motive of his action was a patriotism that raised him above personal ambition and party loyalties. Throughout a critical period he served what he honestly believed was the national cause with a single-minded devotion for which no praise can be too high. It may be true that his belief was narrow, founded on sentiment rather than on reason; that his action in the end was detrimental to the cause he wished to serve; that as a statesman he was shortsighted and unable to comprehend the real issues that

asked to be decided; that in sabotaging the revolution he made certain the sabotage of the Republic; that, if he had been less of a sentimentalist and more of an idealist, he would have done a greater work than he did. But it is also true that to the majority of his countrymen he did save Germany from the disaster of revolution and the suicide of disruption, and that what he did do he did with an acute sense of responsibility and from honourable motives, being true to the light that was in him. Whatever the ultimate verdict on him as a statesman—and it will probably be increasingly unfavourable as years go on—it will never be denied that, as he saw it, he served with sacrificial loyalty that Germany which is not *erstes Reich* nor *zweites Reich* nor yet *drittes Reich*, but is that eternal Germany which is the noblest ideal of a great people, the Germany for which two of his sons died in the field and the third for long suffered in a Nazi concentration camp.

His death left the Reich without a head. It was clear that if the Republic were not to be stultified another republican must succeed the man of November. But so great was the dearth of outstanding personalities that the republicans could not agree on a candidate. Every party put forward its own and none appealed to the imagination, much less to the heart of the nation. Voting was on strict party lines, another general election in fact, and as might have been expected the Nationalist candidate headed the list, but was in a minority of over half a million to the total democratic poll. A second ballot was necessary. This time the fight must be raised above party politics. A Left candidate was impossible to find; the Communists insisted on running their own nominee. Agreement was reached, however, by the democratic parties; for tactical reasons the Weimar parties chose not a Socialist but the Centrist, Marx. The issue would, therefore, be a clear one between democracy and nationalism, perhaps between republicanism and anti-republicanism. That was an issue the Nationalists now, if at any time, could not accept for it was an issue on which they would be hopelessly beaten. Just appreciation of the possible result sharpened Nationalist wits; their device to avoid the issue was almost a stroke of genius.

Since his resignation in 1920 as chief of the general staff,

Paul von Hindenburg had lived in retirement. He was seventy-seven, and a legend, a hero of Königgrätz and St. Privat, a symbol of the old Prussia of Wilhelm I, Bismarck, and Moltke, the incarnation of Germany's effort in the world war, the bulwark of the nation against the invader from without and the wrecker from within. A deputation from the Right finally persuaded the old marshal that it was his duty to Germany to stand. The phrase was effective. After long hesitation, with reluctance, but in the same spirit as he had accepted harder tasks, the call was obeyed. The news of his candidature ran like a flame through the nation and called forth support from circles far to the left of official Nationalism. Had the democracy been wise it would have withdrawn its candidate and let foreign opinion think what it liked; it would have over-trumped the Nationalists' winning card and transformed a legendary hero from a Nationalist into a national candidate, and it could have done so with impunity because not only had the one hero of the war been not the least effective factor in the establishment of the Republic, but by consenting to stand he bestowed on the Republic a sort of consecration from the past. But the times were not ripe for an act of such political wisdom. The three candidates went duly to the poll (April 26, 1925); Hindenburg though nearly a million votes ahead of Marx was a minority victor; but he was in. It was a just result, but even to-day in Germany it takes the historical spirit to see how just it was; the more explicable, therefore, the failure of the democratic parties to see how unnecessary and undesirable it was to have made such a contest possible.

The appalling consequences foreseen by the more excitable of the extremists on either wing and the still more excitable foreign press did not happen. Even on German internal politics which according to the scaremongers should have become the scene of still more bitter conflict the result was beneficial. The Nationalists were so pleased that they became almost reconciled to a republic which had one of their own class at its head. It was only the natural but needless depression of the democrats that induced them to aggravate the nervous spasms in the Allied countries by provoking a minor political crisis and prevented

both republican and Allied politicians from realizing that when Hindenburg took the oath to the Republic, the Republic had for the first time been definitely established. The Nationalist party as such was never again a menace though individual Nationalists were to be more than that; the bitter edge of their opposition to the Republic had been taken off and that was the most notable and should have been an obvious result of the election. Little, indeed, did the democracy which was within an ace of panicking think that seven years later both the democracy that had panicked and the nationalism that had jubilated would be rallying desperately to the marshal in deadly fear of a newer nationalism that was out to give short shrift to the new and to the old Germany alike.

Election excitements over, Stresemann could get on with his most delicate task under slightly more favourable conditions. The Allies soon recovered from their fears, and though the election provided them with a ready propaganda argument, it was of little effect; the reality spoke too clearly. The Dawes plan, it was admitted, had solved very little but an accountancy problem; in a sense it had solved nothing. On the wider view it had touched only a minor economic issue; the major political issue was still untouched and here no experts could be co-opted. Even before Ebert's death Stresemann had launched his first bolt.* What was behind all the Allied fears of Germany, behind all the insistence on fulfilment, behind all the constant interferences in German affairs, even on points of not the slightest real importance, was France's fear of war—with the characteristic cowardly phrase—turning of the age we call it France's desire for security, to the contemporary political mind any negative being worth two positives. To touch directly on that point was impossible, for France's fears were not for 1925 but for an indefinite, incalculable future. What Stresemann did was to revive, and in very concrete form, the idea of a Franco-German mutual guarantee pact on the basis of the Versailles settlement, a pact which should further be guaranteed by other interested Allied powers and which should

* The official offer of a guarantee pact was made in February 1925; unofficial negotiations had been proceeding for some months.

place a definite and perpetual legal obligation on both states not to disturb the *status quo* in the west. In effect he put an issue of war or peace—peace now or war later; there never really was any third possibility—squarely before the French and so skilfully that it looked as if France were the conferrer of benefit. Two circumstances favoured the plan of a pact which roused the wrath of all French chauvinists quite as much as that of their German counterparts. Britain was for the plan, having luckily a Foreign Minister who was not only a statesman but who loved France as a mistress, who had a clean anti-German war record which commended him to the British public. Moreover, France's greatest living politician, Aristide Briand, had returned from political exile to the Quai d'Orsay with not merely a desire for world peace in his heart, but a very human desire to make his political enemies look silly. Stresemann's greatest difficulty was the Nationalist party. It was true it was merely a convenient bogeyman for the French to frighten themselves with, but it was impossible to deny that it was doing its utmost to wreck the policy of fulfilment and understanding. For six years it had been a blight and a curse to Germany; its gains had invariably resulted in a worsening of the international situation, and even now when it was a partner in the policy under discussion it was the most formidable because the most treacherous opponent of that policy's framer. But the spirit of the age will not be gainsaid either by the doubting or the malignant; six months after Hindenburg's election—months of painful and sometimes humiliating negotiation—the German ministers met the Allied ministers at Locarno to conclude a security pact. Within a fortnight the Treaties of Locarno, the first real bit of constructive work for European solidarity since the Armistice, were ready for signature.

Recent events have caused a good deal of criticism even in responsible quarters of the work of Locarno; it was probably that work alone which prevented war in the spring of 1933, though whether that condemns or vindicates it remains to be seen. But Locarno accomplished two things of definite immediate value. As a result of it the territorial settlement in the west now reposed not on an imposed "peace of shame," but on a freely negotiated,

freely accepted, mutually binding treaty. If Germany renounced Alsace and Lorraine which she had already lost, France renounced the Rhineland, which she might subsequently have gained. It is true that the multiplication of guarantee pacts has produced in the minds of many people not confidence in, but contempt of, treaties and that contemporary policy is conducted on the assumption—never for a moment publicly admitted—that while one's own nation will automatically respect all treaties, other nations will observe none of theirs; certain statesmen have even been bold enough to proclaim as a general principle the doctrine of necessity as the overriding legal rule. But law will return eventually to its own, and when it does it will be matter for surprise if the future historian does not declare that the Locarno negotiators, their deficiencies admitted, deserved well of Europe.

In the second place it provided for the entry of Germany into the League of Nations on the invitation of the Allies; Stresemann's skill in inducing what was veritably an insistence by the Allies on Germany's return to the European commonwealth constitutes his greatest diplomatic achievement. It is true that international intrigue of a peculiarly sordid type delayed that entry which did not take place until September 1926 instead of in March as had been arranged, but that mattered little and the incident strengthened, if anything, Germany's position. That invitation rendered the war-guilt clause of the Versailles Treaty of merely historical interest; characteristically enough the fact that it was not formally cancelled caused far more indignation among German extremists than the original insertion had done. Germany had to submit to no scrutiny of her fitness; she was asked to come in, as an equal, by equals, and by that act she was granted equality which is not an affair of guns and tanks but of feeling. The feeling was given tangible expression. In a sense the permanent members of the Council of the League are the inheritors of the old Concert of Europe in which Germany had had her high place. By the admission of her prescriptive right to a permanent Council seat to that place she was restored. To political realism rehabilitation need hardly go further.

The whole burden of the negotiation had fallen on Stresemann,

never a strong man or sparing of himself. The burden could never in any circumstances have been a light one because he did not dare always reveal his own thoughts even to his colleagues, but it was doubled and trebled by factious opposition at home. The Nationalists, flushed with three election victories in less than twelve months, were just in that mood which makes factious opposition so peculiarly irritating. They had no logical reason for it nor ever acted as if they had. They would not leave the cabinet nor would they act as loyal colleagues. The first possibility Stresemann recognized must be avoided at almost any cost, for it was essential to the success of the negotiations that the Nationalists continue to take responsibility for them; and he bore with the second as patiently as he could for Germany's sake, though he, the best nationalist of them all, must have writhed under the recriminations of men who deserved so much less well of their country than he. He risked compromising his relations with the Socialists, his steady allies in foreign policy, by concessions to the Right on domestic issues, and even with that had to endure having his policy publicly attacked by a cabinet colleague—an incident which might easily have ruined the whole business. It takes strength to endure impudence when, besides being needless, it is positively harmful to the national interest. The Nationalists embarrassed him horribly by alternately disclaiming responsibility and insisting on controlling the negotiations. They intrigued with Soviet diplomacy, still militant, against the proposed pact; they did their best to create incidents which could become obstacles and, having watched the whole negotiation jealously to the end, finished a long stupidity by refusing to be parties to "a renunciation of German territory," the territory their own class and their own government had lost in war, and leaving the cabinet (October 25, 1925).

But they were mercifully too late. The Allies had taken the true measure of their importance and their power, and after some bickerings kept the promises preliminary to the treaty—an amnesty to resisters of the occupation authorities, a beginning with the reduction of the armies of occupation for whose upkeep the Germans were paying, and a definite promise by the British

to evacuate Cologne whenever the treaty was signed. The general feeling of the nation was unmistakable, and on the division (November 27) to approve or reject the Locarno Pact the opposition could muster from all the ranks of extremism only one hundred and seventy-four votes. The treaty was approved by a majority of one hundred and seventeen, and the "Nationalist" president, who as was his constitutional right had been kept informed of the course of the negotiations, equally approved. The formal signature took place in London on December 1, 1925; Germany was restored to Europe by the act of her enemies and Cologne became German soil again (January 30, 1926). The war had ended in 1918; peace was now finally declared. To mark the end of a great task greatly done the cabinet—since the defection of the Nationalists a minority rump—resigned (December 5, 1925).

Locarno marked the end of a definite period in international relations. It also indicated the approaching end of a period in German politics. Foreign affairs obviously would continue to bulk largely, but for the first time domestic issues would have a chance to become dominant. That would mean a definite step towards a political state of healthiness and such a step would make necessary a regrouping of forces. Somewhere a basis of power must be found for a true parliamentary government. Whatever might be done on a foreign issue that divided the nation for and against, no cabinet with a controversial domestic programme—and with an infinity of domestic issues awaiting settlement no domestic programme could avoid being controversial—could go on maintaining itself by appeal and counter-appeal, by playing off the Right against the Left, by intriguing inside the parties, by exhausting every possible combination of party or section to maintain a majority and then giving up in sheer despair, only to perform a minor reshuffle and try again. Only the fact that there were burning national issues involved which were also burning international issues had prevented the least observant from seeing that the actual system was the last word in political childishness.

The regrouping took time, as the appreciation that the situation had really changed slowly gained ground. After Locarno Luther

and Stresemann carried on with another minority cabinet; it fell in five months on a domestic issue. Marx and Stresemann carried on again with yet another. These were the days of the Geneva deadlock, days when the Stresemann foreign policy was not yet out of the wood, for of that unfortunate incident its critics made all the capital they could, and of the "idyll of Thoiry," where his private conversations with Briand gave the impulsive Stresemann far too optimistic hopes—as his opponents were never tired of rubbing in every time that Franco-German relations did not go too smoothly—of a genuine Franco-German co-operation which would ultimately transform the whole political situation in Europe. The admission to the League was an immense relief to the German foreign minister. It was the one undeniable tangible evidence of the triumph of his policy; and the triumph was admitted by the nation. A year before he had had to escape angry crowds at a Berlin terminus; his return from Geneva was made the occasion for a great demonstration of grateful pride that must have done his sensitive heart good. The Nationalists read the signs of the times. Unless they acted quickly they would find themselves in a political wilderness of their own making, left to watch Stresemann, and perhaps his party as well, in a Left—a Locarno—coalition working out an agreed social programme that would strike at their vital interests. The prospect was remote, but where vital interests were concerned the Nationalists were always extremely acute. They were nearly too late after all. Stresemann rebuffed with unexpected acerbity their overtures for a Right coalition—they conveniently forgot they had already wrecked two—an acerbity which they found the more disconcerting as the foreign minister so obviously enjoyed a change from the policy of presenting the other cheek. Things were at their most delicate state and the future uncertain when a trifling incident blew up in a violent thunderstorm that cleared the air. The Reichswehr chief, Seeckt, criticized on insufficient knowledge by the Left for permitting a Hohenzollern prince to take part in Reichswehr manœuvres, resigned his post (October 1926). The Nationalists, roused by exulting French comment, made the matter a question of foreign policy which it was not; the Demo-

crats and Socialists made it one of domestic policy, which it was, and assailed the Minister of Defence who was responsible for the Reichswehr to parliament. Passions rose high and when, after much furious and unenlightening controversy over the methods of the Ministry of Defence, the Socialists, from the purest republican motives moved a vote of censure on the government, all the anti-republicans took their revenge on the cabinet by voting for it and carrying it. That by doing so they voted against their own motion was nothing in the heat of the moment, and feelings were so stirred that it seemed as if no possible combination could be found to produce a government that had any hope of lasting. Negotiations ended in a burst of sheer temper, and for a moment it seemed as if the system which had been so painfully recovering were going to relapse into a much worse chaos than ever. But there were still cool heads in Germany who knew that behind the froth and bubble there was a strong public opinion that thought that its representatives were making unmitigated fools of themselves. Acting on their advice the President intervened as he was constitutionally entitled to do. He insisted that in the national interests—after all he was no Left-winger—there ought to be a Right coalition. If the Nationalists agreed then let them come down from the heights of moral indignation and help to form it. If they did not agree, then of course other arrangements would have to be made. The alternative was plain—the Left coalition that they dreaded—and the Nationalists made no further protest. The Right coalition cabinet which took office early in 1927 under the inevitable Marx with a homogeneous following and a comfortable majority was a constitutional republican cabinet. The cause of “monarchy,” never very clearly defined even in the minds of its nominal adherents, faded away. Reaction there would always be, but with the surrender of the Nationalist party it would be reaction within the republican constitution. In more senses than one Germany in 1927 seemed to have completed her painful journey from Versailles to freedom.

CHAPTER IV

THE POLITICAL PROBLEM OF 1927 AND THE STRESEMANN FOREIGN POLICY

WITH the formation of the Right coalition we enter what may be termed the third period of the history of the German Republic. In the first we see it fighting desperately for existence against foreign pressure on the one hand, and the internal forces of dissolution on the other. From the Ruhr war, which marks the end of that period, it emerged not indeed triumphant but intact, having overcome the one by surrender, the second by belated counter-attack. In the second period we see it endeavouring to regain Germany's rightful place in Europe, and at the same time to overcome the stubborn resistance to its effort by the reaction which was no less formidable for having abandoned methods of violence. It achieved the former by able and honest diplomacy, and defeated the latter by the sheer logic of events. Nine years of struggle—in which not only had the losses, material and moral, been appallingly heavy, but time and again the nation had been brought within a hairbreadth of total collapse—had ended in victory. But the nature of that victory must not be misinterpreted. It was not final victory, the end of a campaign. Rather it was that stage in the campaign when the tide definitely turns, when for the first time the enemy is flung on the defensive, when final victory seems the logical end to the struggle on the condition that no mistakes are made.

That final victory, if in politics there ever is a final victory, could only mean the complete liberation and rehabilitation of Germany in the world, and at home the consolidation and unification of the nation under the Republic. The significance of the victory of 1926 lay, therefore, not in the fact of victory, but in the opportunity it gave for a period of recuperation and reconcentration, preliminary to the final advance. The task of the new cabinet was to use this respite to the best advantage.

In the controversial literature which deals with the respon-

sibilities for the fall of the Republic, far too little attention is paid to the year 1927, to the opportunity it afforded, and to the reasons why of that opportunity so little use was made. There is, of course, the obvious reason that the significance of a victory is rarely appreciated by the exhausted army which has just gained it, and whose leaders are more apprehensive of counter-attack than enthusiastic to exploit success. But in the present case no counter-attack was to be expected, and confronted with the failure to exploit success the critics have taken the view either that the victory was so complete that the struggle was over and that effort was thereby shifted to another plane, or that there was no victory, and therefore no opportunity. Either is false. When the most casual observer who compared the internal situation of Germany in 1927 with that in 1919 or 1923 did not have the slightest hesitation in saying that there had been victory, the republican statesmen were not likely to be in any doubt of its reality. Nor, like many casual observers, did they fall into the other error that the struggle was over. Their mistake lay in the fact that they wrongly appreciated the situation created by victory, and so failed to exploit it. Their fault for once was not so much inaction as wrong action.

The root of the error was in the wrong deductions they drew from the course of the struggle before the victory. They thought that the foreign political issue, having been the dominant issue for nine years, was still the dominant issue, whereas the real value of the victory in the foreign political sphere lay in the fact that thereby that issue had ceased to be the supreme issue, and that the statesmen were now free to tackle the internal problem. That they failed to see the proper order in which the problems still confronting them should be taken is pardonable after years of excitement and anxiety, and indeed it need not have been a fatal error if they had only been able to perceive in time the true nature of the internal problem that clamoured now for solution. The responsibilities for the error are difficult to assign. Many of the politicians did perceive the gravity of the national problem, though none of them succeeded in making a correct political diagnosis, but they were hampered first by the

fact that the nation itself still attached supreme importance to the foreign issue, and secondly by the fact that the only statesman among them was the foreign minister, who was entirely absorbed in foreign politics. In 1927, when, in the sphere which he had made so peculiarly his own, so much remained to be done, it was inevitable that Stresemann should view national problems almost solely from the point of view of their effect upon events in that sphere. He felt instinctively that the victory should be completed on the international front where the spectacular success had been gained, and that, until it was completed, a policy of makeshifts would do at home. Actually the position was that, if the Republic was to continue to exist—and after all it was an essential condition, perhaps the essential condition of the success of foreign policy, that Germany should exist as a democratic republic—it was quite hopeless to continue with a system of makeshifts. What was wanted was a home policy as vigorous, as clear, and as promising of success as the foreign policy. Now the Nationalist capitulation to the Republic which was saved by its sincerity from being a humiliating capitulation, the coming into line with the other parties of the only formidable anti-democratic, anti-republican party made it possible for the statesmen to abandon a policy of makeshifts and to make an energetic effort to turn the existing political chaos into order. That was the real importance of the Nationalist action, not the relief it brought to Stresemann, to whom Nationalist opposition had in the end proved so ineffective, and to whose policy even in its third and most daring stage that opposition would hardly have proved more formidable.

It is important, one feels, to make the situation clear, and for that reason the narrative is interrupted by this and the following chapter, for which apology may be due to the reader who may prefer a story to a cloudy political disquisition. He should also be warned against regarding them as more than an attempt at explanation in which there is grave danger of representing what is a part to be the whole, of confusing present and future, and representing as decisive then forces which were decisive only later, of being definite where no definiteness exists, of dogma-

tizing on insufficient evidence, of stating as fact what is really possibility or is merely logical deduction, and of reading into and not between the lines of what evidence there is.

The examination of the situation in 1927 falls naturally into four parts; firstly, the nature of the political problem; secondly, the formation and action of the Right coalition; thirdly, the new Stresemann policy; and, fourthly, the nature and importance of the opposition to it. These discussed, the narrative of fact may be resumed.

If, at the end of 1927, Germany had achieved a brilliant success in foreign policy, that success had been won at a serious cost. For reasons of state, it was a cost that possibly could not but have been incurred, but its payment involved Germany in a political deficit which, unless it were effectually wiped out, would be a burden that would involve in disaster the political system that had incurred it. The cost was the complete cessation of ordered internal political development while the foreign political issue was being settled.

The whole blame for such a cessation is now being laid partly on the republican system itself, partly on the republican statesmen and politicians. Blameworthy the latter undoubtedly were, but the difficulties of their situation are hardly appreciated by the critics. With the best will in the world they could not have dominated the situation, because certain essentials of it were outwith their control. The national boundaries were not fixed till 1921; the rule of the central government was not effective within the limits of the constitution till 1924; and not until 1926 had Germany recovered a relative freedom from the pressure and intervention of her late enemies: even in 1927 she was still under "servitude" both politically and economically. It is very difficult to see how even a Bismarck could have secured normal political development in what were abnormal political conditions not very unlike those obtaining in war.

From 1919 to 1923 the paramount necessity had been to stave off dissolution, to maintain the state in its constitutional form, and to preserve a semblance of government. After 1923, when

the process of dissolution had been sharply checked, the political problem amounted to the uninterrupted production of governments which would enable the foreign minister to secure continuity in foreign policy by an uninterrupted tenancy of the Foreign Office. The best efforts of republican politicians were devoted not to constructive political achievement, but to securing within the limits of the German party system a majority in parliament for the Stresemann policy which would correspond to the majority for it in the country. The result was that, as far as a cabinet was concerned, its programme was reduced to one item. Its composition was a matter of indifference; its relation to parliament was a matter of indifference. It was not an organic thing; it came into being by arrangement, because under the system it was necessary that there should exist some body which could present questions for decision to the sovereign representative body on whom the duty of decision was laid. It possessed no inherent unity; it commanded no loyalty; it was merely an *ad hoc* body. Thus, instead of a national evolution towards political coherence, the mere logic of the situation created a gulf between government and parliament and a gulf between the parliament and the nation. If German political life was to become the normal healthy life of a democracy, these gulfs must be bridged. That is what the critics meant when they demanded a "return to reality." No democratic system can stand, if its essential feature—the parliament—exists in a vacuum; and that was very much the position of the republican Reichstag, whose creation was the most striking political result of the constitutional debates that had produced the Weimar constitution.

In the democratic theory of the parliamentary state, the government is the emanation of parliament; in practice it is the creation of a parliamentary majority which is in turn the result of a majority decision on the part of the electorate. In the ideal system which has become the textbook ideal largely because of the historical evolution of the English system, there exist two parties corresponding roughly to the two political tendencies of conservation and change; one says roughly, because change may of course be the obvious method of conservation. Between these two

parties the electorate votes and confers on one or other power to realize a programme. The government is the executive agent of the majority programme whose most active adherents have constituted a party. Of the parties which "fight" the election, the winner supplies the government, while the duty of the loser is at once to supply a critical opposition, and to be prepared to supply an alternative government when and if the next appeal to the electorate reverses the former decision. The function of the party as a party is to supply a force capable of organizing opinion, and technically its positive work is outside parliament. As an organization it becomes of paramount importance only during a period of interregnum when the nation is being called upon to decide whether or no a change of policy, of majority, of government is necessary. Once the election is over, the function of the majority party which supplies the government (i.e. its own leaders), whatever function (e.g. that of criticism in detail) the individual may arrogate to himself, is to give the government, its emanation, a majority as the parliamentary system demands; and as a party it can have no other function so long as the ministry continues to be the loyal executant of the party policy endorsed by the electorate.

Now to the experience of the German politician who took over the government of the Reich in 1918 that was something entirely foreign. His tradition was of a government imposed on parliament, of a constitutional insistence on the gulf between the executive which was also the legislative power and the representatives of the nation. The whole idea of parliament as the concrete expression of a mandate to a ministry for legislation was, however much he knew by study the theory of parliamentary government, completely alien to all his experience of the relations between parliament and government. As a result the parties had acquired a peculiar meaning of their own; they, and not the ministry, were the instruments, feeble no doubt, of the popular will.

Now had the transference of authority from an autocratic to a parliamentary regime come as the result of an internal political struggle, the problem of adjusting conceptions and practices to

new conditions would have been difficult enough; coming as the consequence of a lost national war, it was not only almost incapable of solution, it was barely comprehended as a problem. Not only did the party system inherited from the Empire not evolve as it should have done; the necessity for evolution was only rarely perceived. The abiding fact was that impotent parties were no longer impotent, and yet the party remained an end in itself, and the parties remained what they had been under the Empire organizations, obstructive to, not co-operating in, government. The creation of a ministry was not an emanation; it was a concession, and the parties never for a moment let any ministry forget that its constitution was the result of the voluntary surrender of a portion of party power which could be revoked at will. The tradition to which the parties were accustomed was that of strong government imposed upon them; the natural reaction was to make quite sure that no government which they supplied would be strong enough to impose itself.

This is what is meant by the romantic phrase, "the party tyranny"; it was a tyranny, and the parties intended it to be one. That such a tyranny was contrary to the true spirit of the parliamentary system they failed to see because of two circumstances. The first was the abnormal conditions of the post-war period under which no government could possibly be strong, and which, indeed, often made government of any kind farcical; and the second, the fatal adoption of a mathematically exact system of proportional representation which encouraged the multiplication of parties, and effectually prevented any one party ever even hoping for power as power is understood in a parliamentary state. Now politics is in essence a struggle for power; otherwise there is no reality in it. In Republican Germany there could be no struggle for power until conditions arose in which power could be used, and then only a struggle for a share in power. Proportional representation condemned Germany to a perpetual succession of coalition ministries.

If the theory of parliamentary democracy reposes more or less on the two-party system, first by historical tradition, and second by the fact that any division in parliament actually brings into

existence, if only for the moment, a two-party alignment even in a multi-party state, social and political evolution has made the two-party state an impossibility. Not merely are the problems confronting a nation no longer capable of being reduced—as they were for so long reduced in this country, a reduction which automatically divides the nation into two—to a moral question involving the answer of yes or no to a principle, and separable into principle on which no compromise is possible and technical detail which requires compromise, but democracy has ended by perceiving virtue in the representation of as many shades of opinion as possible. All sorts of opinions demand and are conceded representation if they can obtain it in the prescribed way. The democratic right to political representation being in theory unlimited, the theory has been carried so far in practice that the right applies to the representation of non-political interests, which the present writer would hold to be contrary to democratic principle, and even to those interests which, political or not, avowedly seek to use the democratic machinery to destroy democracy—which, as not only Euclid would say, is absurd. To the post-war states which awoke in 1919 to constitutional existence, the organization of the political life presented no slight problem because both experience and tradition were deficient, and as among them democracy had intellectual, but not historical, bases, the tendency was to push theory up to and even beyond sane political limits. Everywhere as a result parties tended to multiply, but they were left to work in a system in which a multiplicity of parties could not function politically.

Thus the duty of the parties to supply a government with a true basis was not appreciated. All that was appreciated was the fact that by the constitution a ministry was a technical essential. This is particularly seen in the German experience. The ministry was never regarded as much more than such an essential. Some sort of combination created itself to supply one for the *theory* of the ministry as an emanation of parliament was admitted, but the coalition so created had a negative and not a positive basis. The resultant ministry was in one sense still a ministry *imposed*—by the constitution—on the parties, and in another it

was a mere concession by the parties to parliamentary practice. It was not regarded as the executive agent of the *policy* of the coalition which supplied it; it was the suitor to the coalition for a parliamentary majority to enable it to exist to perform a national purpose. The paramountcy of foreign policy which did divide the nation into two, the presence of Stresemann latterly as the incarnation of a particular foreign policy, prevented the observer realizing that the necessary link between the party or coalition and the government, the *commission* to the ministry to carry out a programme was lacking. Apart from the one question of foreign policy, the ministry was really a formally administrative agent which acquired existence of its own as an agent, and, instead of being part of the coalition, led a separate existence, played off the parties one against the other, including those parties which were nominally its basis, in order to go on existing as a ministry which derived its title actually from its ability to do so.

The result was trebly unfortunate. The party life was deformed, the party programme ceased to have significance, and, when men talked of government, they meant not the ministry but the bureaucracy.

The democratic problem from the point of view of government is fundamentally that of leadership. There is no reason at all why the democratic system, whose essence is the balance of power and the prevention of the over-concentration of power in any one of its parts, should not give efficient government. That in the last resort depends on the character of the democratic leaders. Leadership as a panacea for all political evils, leadership as a means of evading individual responsibility, was not quite so much in fashion in 1927 as it is to-day, when it has attained to the dignity of a magical "word of power." Things had not yet come to the pass to which they were to come later, when a white-blooded generation was to howl for leaders just as Elijah's opponents howled for Baal, and except in Italy, and to a lesser extent in Russia, leadership in the political sense had not yet become identified with gang leadership. Leadership did not present itself to the German politicians of 1927 as a problem to be solved; it seemed a condition that had been realized by the

conference of the title of leader on prominent party officials, and it was only in circles in which criticism of a democratic system was native that grave doubts were cast on the right of such personalities to the title.

In the party-state, leadership to be creative must be exercised through the party, and to be effective must be exercised over the party. In a parliamentary democracy a "national" political leader is either a contradiction in terms or implies a pleasing but meaningless compliment; the party leader is the only *political* leader in a parliamentary state. The charge against the German parties is not so much that they failed to produce leaders, as that they themselves were useless as *media* for leaders. As a result of their evolution the party committee was all-powerful, and it resolutely refused to be led. In the committee were concentrated all the functions of the party and of the party leader. It was the committees who took political control in 1918-1919 and usurped the functions of leadership. It was in the last resort they who made or wrecked cabinets; they decided if the party should join or support a ministry, and if and when they should abandon it; they selected the personnel of the ministry,* and to ensure better their control rarely sent the leader of the party into the cabinet; in many cases there were three distinct leaders, if they may be called so; the party representative in the ministry, the chairman of the party, and the president of the parliamentary party. Thus even in the most *ad hoc* coalition the party minister was not a hostage for the good behaviour of the party; he was a hostage for the good behaviour of the ministry liable to be withdrawn on the slightest provocation. The committee served party interests which they alone were capable of defining, and the supreme interest was the maintenance of independence. Until they were reduced to their proper place, leadership was impossible because no committee will, if it can help it, permit a leader to arise. Half of Stresemann's scanty leisure was taken up in barren conflict on trifles with his self-assertive party committee. This power of the committees was not provided for in the constitution, nor is

* Constitutionally and technically the chancellor did; actually he took whom he got.

it compatible with a democratic system, and in the normal circumstances now returning either they would have to abandon power, or they would wreck the system in which they had been permitted to grow.

The reason for their growth was in the main the fact that as neither under the empire nor under the republican electoral system the party itself had any hope of real power, men with the qualities of leaders, including ambition, were unattracted by politics as a career, and the typical committeeman who is alike jealous of a leader and susceptible to the attraction of the illusion of power took their place. Thus when leaders arose, as in crisis they always will arise, there was no medium in the party system; the committees were too strongly entrenched. The history of the parties under the empire is that of the elimination of leadership in the true political sense; one has only to compare the political names of 1875-1885 with those of 1910-1914. In 1920-1925 the dilemma ought to have been plain. Any leader was condemned to a long sterile battle with the committees; it was therefore in the long run easier and more profitable to found a new party and be oneself a party committee.

The game of politics thus came to consist not in a party supported by a movement of opinion forcing through legislation to a declared end, but in the party committee scoring bargaining tricks. The objectives of the parties were limited in practice by the parliamentary situation; the party programme therefore ceased to have meaning even to the party, and party tactics took its place. The essence of the party programme is at once to lay down the lines of immediate future development and to act as an educational force. In Germany it was an academic profession of faith embracing much that strictly speaking was not political, of prodigious length, and often of considerable politico-philosophical and ethical interest, but entirely Utopian in the sense that politically there was no place in which it could be realized. There was hardly a programme—even the least radical—which would not have taken twenty years to realize, and much of which would not have required for realization decades of social development. All were filled not merely with the incredible but with

the impossible. Nearly every one of them, for instance, included the intention to restore universal military service in one form or another, which, being contrary to the Treaty of Versailles, was unconstitutional, and the carrying out of which would have provoked an international crisis. As expressions of what the German calls a *Weltanschauung*, they reflected no little credit on the studiousness of the party executive, but they left the elector who did not bother about a *Weltanschauung* very cold, since even the most hardened party man knew that, if there had been the slightest chance of obtaining the power to realize them, they would have been very different documents. Politics was saved from complete unreality because in local parliaments there were "real" issues* and practical results, and because only by voting for a party could the elector express his view on the burning issue of the moment—foreign policy coupled with the maintenance of the republican constitution.

The 1920 election had been fought largely on prejudice and personalities with that double issue dominant, and its net result was the failure of anti-republicanism to get a majority. With the advent of Stresemann the issue of foreign policy was clearly posed, and in the two elections of 1924 it was really the only issue. That is to say, for seven years the electorate had actually returned a mandate on one point only and otherwise left all else, as it had to leave it, to the party committees. But

* It is not possible to do more than allude to another cause of party chaos: the internal dissolution of parties as the result of the maintenance of state parties as well as national parties. The existence of state parliaments in which important local issues were decided led to the creation of state party executives as well as to that of state parliamentary parties, and these were as often as not at feud with the national executives, carrying the feud sometimes as far as did the Bavarian Centrists who made the Bavarian People's party, which originally was an integral part of the Centrum for the purpose of national elections, into a separate national party. The confusion that arose when a state executive speaking for an important section of a national party could block the action of the national executive may be imagined, but it was nothing to the confusion caused to the elector who in local and national elections found himself voting for different parties; for example, voting for the Nationalist in Prussia where no national issue was involved, and against the Nationalist at a general election because he disliked Nationalist foreign policy. There were many cases where the voter admitted cheerfully that he had voted for three different parties at the communal, the state, and the national election, and even to membership of two presumably hostile parties.

as the party committee considered it its function not to initiate legislation, but to criticize suggested legislation from the party viewpoint, and as the ministry had no legislative mandate, legislation—and in a modern state unhappily there must be legislation and a great deal of it—tended to fall into the hands of the bureaucracy which in a modern state can continue to administer and even to legislate for quite a considerable time even in political chaos. The German bureaucracy taken over in 1919 with a much smaller change of personnel than might have been expected had an extremely good administrative record won under the empire, a high sense of responsibility, and a remarkably comprehensive conception of the duties of paternal government. It was as inclined to experimentation in social reform as the Socialist party itself, and even in the most chaotic days the Reichstag record for progressive administrative legislation was so good as to make Germany the greatest social service state in Europe. In the period of short-lived cabinets the bureaucracy simply carried on in the "Conservative-Socialist" sense,* and the minister, never sure of more than a few weeks of office and absorbed in the party bargaining, became in most cases merely the mouthpiece of the department of state of which he was nominally the head. The cabinet had a programme of ideas at the best; the legislative initiative came from the departments.

Such legislation was naturally a legislation of expedients, in many cases merely of formal additions to existing laws. It avoided what are called problems, and little difficulties were settled by private negotiations. The result was that except for the foreign political problem and that part of the financial problem which was intimately connected with foreign politics, not a single burning domestic issue had been raised by way of legislation. While the nation was in disarray and pre-occupied as a whole with the national issue and as individuals with the business of keeping alive, the fact that problems were piling up—education, the relations of the central to local governments, national finance, and a score of others—did not seem to matter. But with the

* *Conservative Socialism*—the title of a deeply interesting book by Wickard von Moellendorff—was a phrase invented in a government department

return to normality it began to think seriously of their solution as a necessary sequel to that return. Inevitably the issue was raised as to the competence of the still unfamiliar and in a real sense untried parliamentary system to solve them. That is the real significance of the identification of the parliamentary republic with Germany which was brought about by the Nationalist decision. It meant that what was now on trial was not the form of the state but the parliamentary system; what its ablest professorial defendant has called "the technique of liberty." This was not a situation which the politicians had ever felt any particular obligation to think out. In Germany the opposition to parliamentary democracy had been largely factious; it was still not merely triumphantly efficient—to all appearances—but was hardly challenged in the classic lands of democracy; it was still the goal set before the classic lands of tyranny; and the lands in which it had temporarily suffered spectacular defeat were politically backward. That democracy had enemies they knew, though they hardly knew its subtlest enemies. Fascism and Bolshevism were two obvious ones, and yet both had described themselves as "extreme democracy," a striking admission, and the politicians, cheerfully consoling themselves with the reflection that Russia and Italy did not belong to western civilization, easily came to the conclusion that what might appeal to either could never appeal to the mature, the educated nation. Nor were they without reason for their belief, for, if Germany had rejected Bolshevism, she had rejected less violently but hardly less decisively the version of Fascism offered by her "national" extremists. Even if they had admitted the fact that parliamentary democracy was now on trial, they would not have been alarmed, because they would have felt that an adverse verdict was unlikely.

If there was one thing that was clear, or should have been clear if the parliamentary system were not to be finally condemned, it was that the system of expedients must be abandoned for some principle of government which the electorate could understand, by the application of which it would influence policy which, when applied, would give what was to it good government. What had to be found was a way by which the

electorate decided, or felt it decided, the ministerial programme of legislation. In the multi-party state the programmatic problem is not difficult in itself; what is difficult is cabinet-making, of creating a strong executive as well as giving it a programme to execute. In other words what has to be found in a doctrine of coalition. Towards such a doctrine the multi-party states have not made much real progress partly because social evolution is proceeding at such a pace that it is genuinely difficult for political evolution to keep up with it, and secondly because the multi-party state is itself a transitional stage in democratic development between the party state of theory and something else which is perhaps the non-party state. Any doctrine can itself then be little more than an expedient—even the modern type of dictatorship is nothing more than a peculiarly desperate and unsuitable expedient, while the one-party state is simply that retrogression which is the supreme confession of intellectual bankruptcy—until a new way of political evolution has been found to fit in with the course of social evolution, and Germany with her traditional preoccupation with fertile investigation in the domain of political theory might, in happier circumstances, have taken the lead in devising a doctrine which would have been not so much an expedient as an experiment.

In 1927 the situation in Germany looked ripe for the trial of a new doctrine, the doctrine of alternative coalitions; that is to say a system whereby parties are reduced by coalition to a permanent grouping as in France, but to a grouping of greater cohesive power than in France because of the difference in cohesion between French and German parties. Or to put it rather differently, the problem was to systematize the practice of *ad hoc* coalition by giving a coalition reality of its own, by giving it a coalition existence through a coalition mandate; in other words, to reduce the multi-party state in practice to a two-coalition state.* In this country coalition always means the

* In the multi-party state one must distinguish between a change of ministry and a change of coalition. In France the personnel of the ministry often changes, although the coalition which produced it does not change and goes on "emanating" ministries.

crisis coalition,* the true *ad hoc* coalition, which as a result of political tradition the country, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, seeks to get rid as soon as possible; and the foreign parallel to our coalitions is the so-called "national government," a phrase so unhappily used here, which pathetically recalls the *unions sacrées* of war-time, the yearning for which is the most curious political phenomenon of our transition age, finding its final expression in the crudity of the one-party state.

In France the coalition is based on the group, and the doctrine of alternation reposes on an alternation of tendencies. In Germany it would require equally to be so based, but on that tougher entity, the party. The situation, as it had developed by 1927, looked very favourable at least for experimentation. The times were settled; the two burning political issues of the day had received solution; the extremist parties were impotent; the country was settling down and economic prosperity was returning. There was therefore no unhealthy preoccupation with politics, no rising clamour for something, anything, to be done.

In the political life of Germany there did exist two tendencies which could form the basis of a system of alternative coalitions. The Weimar constitution was not merely a document which settled the political form of the state; it was at once a comprehensive statement of the rights and duties of citizens collectively and individually in the state, and a broad statement of the lines on which political development should run. Once, therefore, it was clear that the form of the state would no longer be assailed by unconstitutional methods, the way was open for the fulfilment of the constitution if necessary by amendment. From the two parties which were in theory fundamentally anti-constitutionalist, the Socialists who wanted a Socialist state and the Nationalists who wanted an autocratic state, nothing was now to be feared in the way of illegality by the most rigid upholder of the constitu-

* The true crisis coalition may be a confession of reluctance to assume responsibility, but it is not necessarily a symptom of political decadence. At its best and in a virile state it is really the democratic device of obtaining a strong executive without violating the constitution, corresponding to the constitutional dictatorship with a time-limit employed for the same reason by republican Rome, whose practice deserves closer study to-day than it gets.

tion. Both were now for the practical purposes of politics constitutional parties who stood for two tendencies, two opinions of the way in which the constitution should be amended and the road in which political development should go. The Socialists had been one of the creators of the democratic republic; the Nationalists had now accepted it, and so the way was open for the formation of a coalition of which the Nationalist tendency would be the basis and for a coalition of which the Socialist tendency would be the basis, especially when Nationalism had ceased to stand for monarchism and Socialism had ceased to stand for Marxism. There appeared no necessity then, for a great centre party which would force both Nationalism and Socialism out to the wings, nor was there much chance of creating one or even of creating a centre coalition with any life in it. In the first place the existence of a vertical confessional party,* while it made a cleavage in all classes, affected in the main the middle class. In the second place, as a result of social evolution the middle class had lost homogeneity; what looked like homogeneity, e.g. in England in 1931, in Germany in 1933, was merely temporary coalescence of elements that felt themselves threatened. In 1927 there was no need for such coalescence, and the middle class was as everywhere splitting into sectional interest parties, which nothing but a threat to middle-class existence could cause to come together again.

There was, therefore, in the existence of the middle-class parties nothing to embarrass the two great coalitions except the existence of a confessional party, and that was not inevitably an embarrassment. The interest parties would of themselves tend to fall into one or other coalition, and the confessional party, being an interest party, would tend to do the same. Under such a system of alternative coalitions there would be an impulse to leadership, for the leader would not only be able to get something done, but he would have to get something done. The task of leadership would be to create a power of coalescence by supplying a reason for coalescence in the shape of a definite legislative programme, and so to give the coalition a reason for existence of its own.

* *vide*, p. 75.

The existence of a Socialist party was, as we have seen, no barrier to such a development, but actually a condition of it, and the existence of extremism was not a menace to a strong state, but actually a factor in coalescence.* It was only by the development of this or a similar doctrine that there was any hope of breaking the power of the party committees, a power whose existence was now being ever more widely recognized as a positive obstacle to good government, and beginning to be recognized as a menace to the democratic system.

For German political life the year 1926 had been largely a wasted year, but in other ways it had been a year of valuable experience, for it had wakened the politicians up to a sense that things were very far wrong with the system. They had at last recognized that after eight years of republicanism the republic was anything but consolidated. The problem here is often summed up in the rather misleading phrase, "a republic without republicans." It is true in the sense that the republican form of government was not the result of popular demand, much less of popular conviction, but had been imposed on Germany because of the completeness with which autocracy had abdicated, and because the only other alternative was a dictatorship of the Left. It is also true in the sense that there was no conscious process of republicanization, nor any growth of natural enthusiasm for the republic; it had become acceptable simply by familiarity, and its maintenance and its existence had been secured for reasons that had nothing at all to do with the strength of republican sentiment. But what is also true is that the active opposition to it was less due to dislike of republicanism than to dislike of its personnel. That opposition was led by a class deprived of and anxious to recover privilege; the objection was not to a republic, but to a democratic republic. By their acceptance of the republic the anti-democratic elements had transferred the battle for democracy from the parlours of conspirators to the polls. It is, one thinks, true to say that so far the nation had demanded only government and prosperity, although it had never really got the former and only belatedly the latter; that it was not fundamentally interested in the form of

* *vide*, e.g. p. 207.

government, and that in its majority it stayed true to the republic only because it felt instinctively that in times of crisis privilege or class does not make a good basis of government. There was no violent anti-republican movement; the most deadly weapon of the anti-democratic elements had not been the political argument but the economic fact that to wide circles of the nation prosperity had not been the chronological successor of the establishment of the new regime. Extremism apart, there was a large body of conviction on the one hand that the old ways were better; on the other, that democracy must, if the phrase be admissible, be socialized. Between the two stood a very divided body of opinion, which on the whole was united in favour of the actual regime. The effect was stabilizing; the struggle for power meant a struggle to accomplish change on the one hand, and to prevent certain types of change on the other. There was, therefore, no need for republicanization either in the form of special defence of the republican form of government—in any case there existed a comprehensive act of parliament for that—or in the form of weeding out from the administration anti-republican elements. That weeding out had to a certain extent been done so far as the higher administrative posts were concerned, and it is a little comic to hear democrats now complain that the cabinets, which were rarely cabinets entrusted with the duty of defending democracy and almost invariably contained elements which were professedly hostile to Liberal democracy, went on permitting anti-Liberals to preach to their destruction one or other of their damnable creeds in positions which were in the gift of the state. The later failure to deal with anti-constitutionalist violence is on quite another footing from the alleged failure in 1927 to shut the indiscreet mouths of parsons and professors.

What was far more necessary than, what was indeed necessary for, republicanization was to prove that the republican system could "legislate for prosperity" which is what is ultimately meant by a demand for "good" or for "strong" government. Prosperity in the good old days was regarded as the creation of individual effort; to-day its creation is one of the tasks of government. The tendency of social evolution is anti-individualist, and

so the individual tends to believe that the collective effort is not only something far superior to a congeries of individual efforts, but that, as an effort, it exists apart from individual effort. By insistence on the collectivity the sense of personality is lost, and with it the sense of individual responsibility for the collectivity, till by a queer paradox the individual in proportion as the collectivity takes more solid form begins to lose sense of himself as a part of the collectivity. The collectivity becomes something with responsibility towards him, and his own personal prosperity—a not unfair conclusion in such a complexity as a modern civilization—is always someone else's business. It is fatally easy to identify that someone else with the government. That was particularly true of the German brought up to the tradition of paternal government and moderate state Socialism, of government which, to give it its due, was successfully paternal. He asked therefore of a republican government that it should be no less paternal; if it was not, if it was not the guarantor of wages and profits, away with it. To secure republicanization meant the affording of proof that under the republic things would go better than under the empire, regarded now by the older voter as a golden age. Now it was exceedingly unlikely that in the post-war world of transition things would or could go better. The only hope, therefore, for the republican politician was to make real that passage in the constitution which derives all power from the people, and by making the nation identify itself with the government throw back some of the responsibility forced upon him.

The gulf between the people and the "state" was concealed by excitement aroused by elections, by the reality of local politics, and by the fact that the more the German affirms that Bismarck was right in calling him a non-political animal, the more he talks politics. It was not apparent to many Germans because, preoccupied with foreign politics, they saw in the conduct of foreign policy evidence of the effectiveness of the majority vote. Simply because he did vote, it was invisible to the average German because it could so easily be filled with election statistics. But once the fact was gripped that there was a gulf, and that actually

there was no way of getting what he wanted done, no way of forcing an issue, the system was doomed if it were not bridged. The true explanation of the rise of National Socialism politically is that a desperate nation tried to bridge the gulf between the people and the system by abolishing the system.

The identification of the people and the government will never be admitted except at emotional moments. But the attempt at it must be constantly made in the modern state to keep alive the sense of individual responsibility, without which no democratic state can exist. On all grounds therefore it was necessary to "restore reality," that is, to restore a sense of unity by establishing an organic connection between the individual elector, through the party and the parliament, and the state, that is, the government, for that is what the elector means when he talks of "the state." That, and not the abolition of the two centre elements, is the true democratic unity. What broke the schematic unity was the existence of the party committee, and there was no other way of breaking its tyranny save by substituting the coalition for the parties.

It was freely admitted by 1926 by most thinking people that the "restoration of reality" was necessary. The demand for something that looked like a normal government was becoming too strong even in a nation unaccustomed to normal government for the party committees to resist. People were beginning to find something absurd, now that they had time to consider it, in a system in which the nation elected a parliament through parties which did not regard the decision as a mandate; in which parties formed *ad hoc* coalitions which they refused to support; in which cabinets, because of their lack of true basis in parliament, were unable to perform even on the most elementary conception of them the tasks imposed on a ministry by the democratic system; in which party programmes were not programmes; in which party committees usurped the functions both of parliament and ministry; in which the bureaucracy to fill a vacuum assumed legislative initiative, and in which the rôle of parliament was confined very much to formal voting. The foreign political success had concealed the glaring defects of the system; after

that success it could hardly be concealed much longer even if times continued to be normal. The time had come when in their own interests the parties would have to sacrifice their independence, to strengthen the position of the constitutional executive—the ministry—to the detriment of the unconstitutional legislature—the party committee. The Nationalist decision was a party interest decision, but it was also a declaration that one party at least perceived the dangers of carrying independence too far. It was also a victory of leadership on the part of leaders who had been brought to a sudden sense of the virtue of a new type of coalition. That type, although the Nationalist decision was designed to avoid there being ever any other coalition than a Right coalition, was the alternative coalition, and it was a type that was being forced on the parties by a public opinion that sensed, if it could not define, what it wanted. It wanted a clear home policy; it could not get it unless a new doctrine, a new type, of coalition was introduced.

Much of the above is very academic and raises many controversial issues. It can be easily criticized by pointing to the fact that actually the necessity of a doctrine of coalition is hardly ever mentioned. That is true, but it is also true that the logic of events had put the issue of alternative coalitions before the politicians; if they avoided the issue that does not mean that it was not present.

It is pertinent here, in order to illustrate the position, to examine the history of the formation of the Right coalition. It will be remembered that the minority Marx cabinet—Democrats, Populists, Centrum, and Bavarians—had fallen on December 17, 1926, on the Reichswehr issue as the result of a hostile combination of Socialists and Nationalists. Just before the defeat the chancellor had been negotiating with the former for the creation of a Great Coalition, knowledge of which fact had been a factor in the Nationalist decision to seek participation in the government. Although the party committees were very active, nothing official was done till January 10, but it had already become clear that, as a result of the indignation against the Socialists in the Centrum, and, particularly, in the People's party, a Great Coalition was

out of the question. The first solution recommended to the President was to entrust to a representative of the Populists the task of forming a government "from the Centre to the Right."* The Nationalists were willing to co-operate on the basis of recognition of the Republic and support of Stresemann, but their willingness was not yet official. The Centrum favoured the Great Coalition, which the Socialists declared they would help to form, but in view of the Populist opposition the proposal was dropped, and the Centrists confined themselves to refusal to co-operate with Nationalism; the consequences of a previous bargain to recognize the Republic were still too fresh in their memories. Negotiations were then begun all over again by the Centrum, or rather by Marx himself, the Centrum reserving freedom of action, to the accompaniment of all sorts of pronouncements by unofficial persons and by the tentative offer of the Nationalist leader, Westarp, to negotiate the "programme" of a Right coalition. It was clear that Marx's real aim was another minority cabinet with the support of the Socialists, but with the attempt of the latter to dictate policy, the Populists declined to participate in it, unless it was clear that all hope of any agreement with the Nationalists was seen to be vain. Marx, therefore, abandoned his attempt, but was recalled by the President, and ordered

* It is worth while indicating the arithmetical conditions in parliament and the majority possibilities in a house of 493 members of various coalitions suggested.

Weimar Coalition (Socialists, 131; Centrum, 69; Democrats, 32): For, 232; against 261.

Weimar Coalition (as above, *plus* Bavarians, 19): For, 251; against, 242.

Centre Coalition (Centrum, 69; Bavarians, 19; Democrats, 32; Populists, 51): For, 171; against 322.

Great Coalition (Socialists, 131; Centrum, 69; Democrats, 32; Populists, 51): For, 283; against, 210.

Right Coalition (Nationalists, 103; Centrum, 69; Bavarians, 19; Econ. Party, 17; Populists, 51): For, 259; against, 234.

Against the government in any case voted 14 Fascists and 45 Communists. The two other parties (the Hannover party 4, and the Land League 8) almost invariably voted with the Nationalists. It will thus be seen that if the Great Coalition was rejected, only a Right Coalition could enjoy a coalition majority. The Right's fears of a dissolution, the obvious democratic solution, are justified by the figures for 1928 given in the Appendix. The majority for the Stresemann policy was a minimum one of 145 in a full house; after the Nationalist conversion it was one of 434.

to try once again and definitely for a Right coalition. After two days' negotiation he got the consent of his committee for the attempt on the basis of a "programme" drawn up by that body. After three days' more negotiation Marx succeeded in getting an agreed points "programme" endorsed by the Centrum, the Bavarians, the Populists, the Democrats, and the Economic party. In this the very small amount of legislation suggested was purely administrative except, to some extent, an education bill; all that mattered in it was the demand on the Nationalists for an *unconditional* pledge to maintain the Stresemann policy and to defend the republican constitution. Meantime, in the Nationalist executive, the anti-republicans had again got the upper hand, and they secured a refusal to give a pledge, but permitted an offer to make continuance of a recognition implied in joining the cabinet dependent on results. The Democrats thereupon withdrew their support, and another breakdown seemed imminent. It was now that the President intervened finally, and the Nationalist executive gladly bowed to his influence, despite the frantic protests of the intransigents. That was on January 27. Then came the real business, the distribution of offices, an unseemly bargaining in which the Nationalists had to abate their demands for five and content themselves with four ministries. That arranged, the committees selected the ministers. The moment the lists were out, the Centrum executive protested against the inclusion in the Nationalist list of a gentleman whom they called a Fascist. Marx submitted the list to the President with the obnoxious gentleman's name not in it. There was instantly a burst of furious protest from the Nationalists, whose executive only saved themselves by leaving the decision to the President, and asking him to choose another. The President left the choice to the chancellor, and finally on February 1 the list was complete.

Now in all these negotiations there is not a word of a true coalition, or of a creative legislative programme, not a word of consulting the party, not a hint of asking the opinion of the electorate. Apart from the undignified scramble for seats, there was fundamentally nothing at issue except the one point of

formal, and not merely implicit, recognition of the Republic and pledge of support to the Stresemann policy. There is no hint anywhere of any desire to get anything done; no attempt to put coalition government on anything but the old fragile rickety basis; never any appreciation of the fact that the conversion—for here it is true to speak of conversion in the political sense—of the sober wing of the Nationalist leadership was a political event of the first magnitude and changed the whole political situation; no attempt to relate the decision to the situation of the country and to the state of public opinion. The party executives negotiated with the same enthusiasm, the same hard bargaining, the same insistence on personalities, and in the same isolation as any tiny provincial golf club, as if their decisions had no reference to anything or anybody except themselves. They were charged to produce a government on certain conditions; they had produced it, and they saw no reason for anyone to criticize them for not doing something else. A more perfect example of the usurpation of power by the party committee would be hard to find.

The result satisfied them perfectly; indeed they regarded it as a masterpiece and as proof at once of their acumen and indispensability. Now take the reactions to it of the Republic's one great political mind—although he knew less about political theory than many of his competitors for the title—Stresemann. There were few politicians less convinced than he either of the acumen or the indispensability of the party committees; no one had raged more bitterly than he against the tyranny of the parties when they put obstacles in his way, and his rage was all the more impressive as there were few better party men in Germany.

The significance of the Nationalist decision to the system he seems hardly to have considered. To him everything was still referred to the foreign political issue. Instead of that decision appearing the starting-point at least for fresh investigation, he regarded it as the end of a chapter which he hoped devoutly would have no sequel—the chapter of open unscrupulous resistance to his policy. But he saw in it no “conversion”; he saw only the attempt to continue the party tyranny by other methods, a party political manoeuvre, a Junker trick. But this time the

Nationalists were not playing a trick. The decision was in quite a different category from the "split" on the Dawes plan or the subsequent attempt to wreck Locarno by entering the government. It was a decision based on a very accurate appreciation of the situation by the leaders of the party, of the trend of public opinion, of the effect of the foreign political success, and of the consequent decline of that anti-republicanism which hated the Republic because it was an instrument of capitulation. It had been taken after very acrimonious discussion, and at the cost not indeed of formally splitting the party, but of defying what was actually a very strong body of anti-republican opinion, and so profoundly shaking the position of the party in the country where it was the respectable refuge of all those who, while not yet prepared to go extremist, yet had reason to dislike and wished to protest against the conditions under which they lived, and for the unpleasantness of which, as compared with the old days, they blamed the regime. For nine years the Nationalists had proclaimed *urbi et orbi* their undying hatred to the system which had not just destroyed Germany, but had prevented them ruling amid the ruins. They had been the centre and the support of every counter-revolutionary movement; their frank policy had been to restore the old authoritarian regime by every means they could, and to many of their rank and file the decision now to recognize the Republic brought sheer bewilderment not un-mixed with indignation. The "national" reasons, the political reasons, even the sordid reasons why their leaders should suddenly deny all their political past and plump for constitutionalism they could not appreciate; in their majority they were nearly as impervious to reason as Hitler himself, and in any case, to the "national" mentality which those leaders had spent years in fostering, there were many higher laws than those of reason. In the party the decision was largely accepted, so strong are the bonds even of party discipline in Germany, but it was not enthusiastically endorsed anywhere. The most that could be said was that the majority consented to let the experiment of co-operation with the Republic be tried, and conveniently forgot the terms on which it was being tried. In these pages the National-

ist leadership has not been tenderly handled. The more reason then to give credit for an act of wisdom and political courage to that section of it which was willing at last to look facts in the face and draw the obvious conclusion from them. It was a sensible and a patriotic decision. That is not to say it was an altruistic decision, or that it was the result of a profound process of spiritual and intellectual conversion. It was admittedly a party political decision; it did not imply the existence of positive love for the Republic, nor as a result of it could one expect to see the Nationalists man the barricades in the Republic's defence; it was due to the very sound conviction that, if the present prestige of the Republic was maintained and increased, then the Nationalist party, if it remained in intransigent opposition, must expect to lose a considerable amount of the support which it had collected since the days of disaster in 1919, and to find itself permanently shut out from participation in the government, and so influencing the course of events. In 1927 the most critical observers saw no valid reason why hostility to the regime should not go on diminishing, and, if it did diminish, there was little hope of power for a party which put unbending hostility to it as the first and only point in its programme. And that of itself constituted political conversion.

Now let us admit that such a view was fantastic, that it was all a trick. Let us admit that the whole history of the Nationalist decision was not exactly conducive to belief that it was not a trick. Let us admit what is fact that within the Nationalist executive the party for recognition of the Republic had been in a minority, that every endeavour had been made to secure the advantages of office without committing the party to anything, and that only the intervention of the President, who brought a little of his heavy common sense into the discussion, had tipped the scales in favour of the minority. Let us admit that it was not to be taken for granted that the majority would discover sudden enthusiasm for its defeat, and that there was reason to feel that suspicion was the best attitude, and that Nationalist co-operation was to be borne, not welcomed.

But in bearing it why not turn it to profit? That is what Strese-

mann did do, but solely from the point of view of foreign policy. That policy was at a difficult stage, at so difficult a stage that he was prepared to sacrifice anything to it, and he regarded his acceptance of Nationalist co-operation not as an opportunity, but as a sacrifice. For the sake of that policy he preferred to have them as doubtful allies rather than open enemies; he saw no necessity to turn them into such allies as would have made the Right coalition strong. To him the Right coalition was preferable to the Great Coalition only because it gave him a truly national majority, and would make a vast impression across the frontier, where it would be regarded as a national coalition. He knew that as a rule national coalitions, though politically sterile, are always considered by the foreigner, though quite wrongly, as a notable manifestation of national unity. Any semblance of national unity was therefore worth having.

His pre-occupation is natural, but it prevented him realizing that the nation is pre-occupied only with the dramatic. In the new stage his policy would not produce the dramatic, and would not produce enthusiasm. Had he shaken off Foreign Office spectacles he would have seen that the real value of the new coalition was in the possibility it afforded of distracting the nation from foreign political curiosity. Nothing could have freed his hands so effectively; there was no better condition under which to work than to have the electors engrossed in home policy; no worse condition than to have to deal with a nation with nothing else to think about than what the Foreign Minister was up to now. The former condition implied a coalition programme, and that implied a real coalition, the real coalition that the nation needed and even wanted.

But actually Stresemann no more than the parties wanted a real coalition. If he wanted freedom of action in his own domain, they would not submit to restriction in domains that were not their own. They did not intend to sacrifice to a coalition one whit of their independence, and for party reasons intended to go on controlling the government instead of supporting it, and the classic means of controlling a coalition government is to keep the threat of dissolution hanging perpetually over it. They intended,

despite its majority and despite its homogeneity, to keep the new government as weak as any of its predecessors. Stresemann cannot but have seen that; nor can he have failed to recognize that a weak coalition was almost useless to him as a medium. But he had his own reasons for not wanting it to be strong. If it developed into a strong coalition and lasted, then it would provoke the formation of an opposition coalition, and would fall as a coalition. There would virtually be a two-party alignment—the Centrum being regarded as perpetually interchangeable—and if to a real coalition a real coalition succeeded there would in the latter be no place for a Populist minister. At the moment what he felt must be avoided at all costs was a situation in which he might have to leave the Foreign Office. He felt that no one but himself understood his policy, that no one but himself could carry it through; that, even if continuity of foreign policy were assured, it could not be carried through even by a Left politician who understood it, because he would encounter an opposition that would wreck it. He saw that with painful clearness, and it determined his whole inaction. He did not see that a failure to take advantage of the opportunity to reform the system constituted a far greater threat to the ultimate success of his policy than any change at the Foreign Office. If parliamentary government broke down, and that was the danger of weak coalitions, the policy was gone. But he did not think that parliamentary government would break down; after all it had existed in times much worse than these, and better times were coming. He did not foresee crisis, and so he failed to see that the return to normality itself produced parliamentary crisis. And so a golden opportunity was lost because no one would take it; the Right coalition ended as it began. A second Stresemann might have taken it, but there was only one Stresemann, and at the moment he was veritably locked up in the Foreign Office; he was not yet a national leader.

To the observer to-day there is something fantastic in the creation of a government with an imposing majority which was deliberately left precarious, proposing to be responsible for the government of a great nation with no other programme than defence of the state form and a determination to support the

foreign minister in a course whose end no one knew save himself. But no one in Germany then saw anything particularly extraordinary in it. Everyone was painfully accustomed to hand-to-mouth existence. The nation, reflecting that administration always goes on, hoped that things would work out all right; the politicians shared that hope, but did nothing whatever to realize it. What was definite was that the gulfs between the parliament and the government, between the parliament and the nation, would not be bridged yet; they would therefore widen, the better to receive the wrecks of the democratic system when the inevitable engulfment came. But for the moment Stresemann was satisfied, for, as far as foreign policy was concerned, he saw six months' plain sailing ahead.

It is now time to turn to that policy for which he was prepared to sacrifice everything. It is not easy to describe it in detail, for he never was in a position to expound it in its breadth and depth and death took him before more than the initial stages had been passed. It was, we are told, his intention to write his memoirs, and in these he would presumably have given a considered view at once the development of his thought and of the sequence of events which that thought helped to determine and by which in turn its further development was conditioned. He died before he could even begin that task, and the evidence left us consists of his public speeches, his private letters, fragmentary diaries and memoranda, the recollections of his intimates, and the calumnies of his enemies. In none of these is the impulse to state the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth particularly evident, and this is especially true of the letters. If some of them reveal only too patently the genuine feelings of the writer at the moment, most of them are clearly diplomatic letters, letters written for a purpose, and designed often as much to conceal as to reveal the real ends of his policy. The extraordinary tendency of the modern critic to treat such documentary evidence as if it were in some mysterious way evidence given under oath has been responsible for a good deal of stupid censure. A letter written to disarm in advance a possibly awkward opponent is not

necessarily a frank and honest revelation of its author's true feelings, not even when it is marked "strictly confidential." In putting in such letters as evidence, the whole circumstances ought to be detailed, and the reader reminded that the persuasiveness of the politician and the attempt by the statesman to conciliate opposition have no more in common with the exposition of the scientific investigator than with the asseveration of the most accomplished liar of all, who never calls a spade aught but a spade. To accuse Stresemann of insincerity when he wrote a letter whose contents were very different from those of a contemporary public utterance is doubly wrong. The accusation not only confuses the negotiation of a statesman with the sworn testimony of a witness, and so misuses the term "sincerity"; it attaches a totally fictitious value to a totally fictitious consistency. Stresemann's whole personality, his whole thought, was the very reverse of static. No other contemporary statesman had his capacity for sincere evolution. Those of his critics who are sufficiently obscurantist to object on principle to anyone evolving in any sphere, and attach particular stigma to evolution in the political sphere, may be neglected; those who admit the rectitude of evolution, but think that they are entitled to dictate its course, would be equally negligible, were it not for the fact that in their criticism of Stresemann's policy they find it easy to pick out the sins in it against formal logic. Stresemann was not a logical thinker in the formal sense. His thought developed not merely by a logical process that can be followed step by step; it also developed in a way that, to all appearance, was arbitrary and illogical, for he was not an intellectual machine, but an intensely human organism, extraordinarily sensitive, and even susceptible. The contest between his logical processes and his instinctive reactions is often striking; his opportunism in action is often at variance with his conviction; he employed not very often, though too often for the purist, the legitimate political weapons of reserve and dissimulation. But he was none the less fundamentally honest, and the present accusations of dishonesty dishonour not the accused but the accuser, who is entirely unable at any point in a life of extraordinary difficulty even in its most trying hours to

detect treachery to the faith that was in him. The firm bases of that faith on which he rested his whole political activity, and by which his sincerity and his honesty, however we define these terms, must ultimately be tested he never stated; they can be deduced only from the risks which he took. The bases were unalterable; the expression of the faith changed, developed, matured. Inconsistent he certainly was, but it was the inconsistency of growth. That it should be consistent for the body to pass from youth to age, and that it should be inconsistent for the mind of the statesman to suffer similar change—for that is what the most damaging criticism of Stresemann can be reduced to—strikes one as being as essentially a stupid proposition as to accuse a tree of inconsistency because it grows this way and that as sunlight attracts and obstacles divert, until it looks utterly unlike the formal tree of the botanical textbook. Yet is there at any point in its growth, any instant of time, when it ceases to be wholly a tree, that is, to be consistent? So it was with him. He grew also as conditions outwith his control helped to determine. The Stresemann of 1923 was not the Stresemann of 1927, still less the Stresemann of 1929, simply because he was a living thing and not dead matter which, because in these days one form of it is deified in the machine, is so often, when suitably clad, mistaken for a statesman.

The characteristic of the period with which we are now dealing, which had produced the Stresemann of 1927, was a relaxation of the general tension, national and international alike, that had existed since the war. In all the countries of Europe, as well in the relations between those countries, a process of settling down may be seen which may be expressed politically in the phrase already used, consolidation towards the centre. War psychosis—to use the modern jargon—had yielded to peace psychosis. To many who had managed during the war years to keep their thinking apparatus functioning normally, and who likened the coming of peace to the shuddering awakening from nightmare to the almost immediate resumption of untroubled existence, the process had seemed painfully slow. Actually the political return to the normal had been much more rapid than any serious student

of history could have expected. The spiritual and intellectual devastations of the war constituted something very different from nightmare. If they were not creative they had at least released many forces whose intensive struggle forms so much of post-war history. But by 1927 these forces had been brought under control; they were becoming the agents of construction as the instinctively conservative nature of man recoiled from completing the work of destruction begun in 1914. The struggle was not yet over, but it was being confined within limits inside which the destructive aspect of the forces in presence was at least less apparent. The view—expressed in very different forms and often producing unexpected practical results—was gaining ground that mutual co-operation possibly might, while mutual hostility certainly could not, achieve the preservation of a common civilization necessary in its lowest as in its highest aspects to the peaceful development of the nations. Of that view Locarno was the most significant political result. It was not a view which was held yet by a majority of Europeans—it must not be confused with the purely negative pacifism that was so prevalent and is so impotent—but it had certainly become the view of a majority of intelligent Europeans who saw salvation solely in making the law of Europe the law of peace and co-operation.

It was certainly Stresemann's view, but he was well aware that it was a view opposed by many of his countrymen, who held that the law of peace was the law of servitude. While as an idealist who had accomplished an immense practical achievement he could not but believe that the new unity which was apparent in Europe was, if it still lacked formal bases, a deeper unity than that continent—or the civilized portion of it—had hitherto known, as a realist he could not but see the force of the argument so popular in Germany that that unity had as its original, and in a sense its only, basis, the subjection of Germany. The change from war to peace mentality in Germany was at once more and less radical than in the Allied countries. Germany was the defeated country, and opinion could not but take extreme forms. There was a section of the German nation which carried pacifism to the verge of ferocity; there was another and a much larger

section which was permanently irreconcilable and quite incapable of that comprehension which is essential in order to receive as well as to bestow forgiveness. Between these sections the great mass of the nation hovered between regret for the past and memory of old wrongs and faith in the future and hope of coming benefits. If the nation had wavered between the pacifist and the irreconcilable, and had finally rejected the former without definitely accepting the latter, it was liable at any moment to come down heavily on the side of the irreconcilable. German policy hovered perpetually between the deep sea of national pride and the devil of Allied pressure; it could not be realist in the statesman's sense of the word, that is, do what is on the long view best. No commonsense realist government which adopted the policy of surrender so urged on Germany's statesmen by Germany's friends in other countries would have lasted a week, and these statesmen may be pardoned for believing that it was more important that government should be maintained than that the exigencies of the academic should be satisfied. There is no doubt at all that the best policy for Germany all along would have been frank acceptance and fulfilment of the treaty. A distinguished British journalist said so to Stresemann, and records that he was astonished. What he was astonished at was not the novelty of the policy, but at the assumption that he did not know it was the best policy, and at the political *naïveté* that did not see that it was an impossible policy. It is true that no statesman can simply confine himself to the bounds of the possible and remain a statesman, but there are times in the life of a nation when the distinction between possible and impossible is as mercilessly clear as it is in the dictionary, when impossible means impossible absolutely and not relatively. With the relatively, the conventionally impossible, the statesman can, though he often fails to, deal; before an absolute he, like the rest of us, must bow.

Merely legal obligation sat lightly on the conscience of a people which felt that it had been unjustly treated, and recognized no moral obligation to fulfil or even observe the Treaty of Versailles. There never was any repudiation on moral grounds of

the anti-treaty agitators from the commonplace mob orator to the less commonplace patriotic assassin; the criticism of either amounted to an accusation of faulty tactics; any real reproof that was levied against them was on the purely domestic ground that the activities of the gangs were detrimental to the existence of the republican system. It was of course evident to those responsible for policy that it was quite absurd to expect to return to the European commonwealth and at the same time reject unilaterally or more or less furtively violate an integral part of that commonwealth's public law. But not only had a considerable number of such responsible persons begun to regard such a return as undesirable; the basic fact was that the nation in its majority had rejected the treaty—the majority for Locarno was due to the recognition that Locarno was a defeat for the treaty—and differed only in the manner and extent to which that rejection should be made defiant.

But Stresemann had one asset; the opponents of defiance were by 1925 in an overwhelmingly strong majority. The Ruhr experience, if it had been of immense benefit to the national moral, had shown very plainly the disastrous practical consequences to Germany of even passive resistance to aggression. To that majority there was a middle course between surrender and defiance, and to be approved the government policy had to strike a somewhat delicate balance between an appearance of firmness calculated to satisfy the national pride and an appearance of pliancy calculated to allay the fears of those beyond the frontiers who saw in every German intransigence a threat of immediate war.

For three years Stresemann had conducted policy in that state of balance under the savage criticism of those who thought that he inclined too much to the anti-German side. In 1927, as the nation looked back, all but the hidebound critics were driven to admit, without prejudice to possible future consequences, he had accomplished two definite things. He had succeeded in getting Germany's treaty burden made definite in the sense that what was fixed represented an unincreasable maximum, capable in legal ways of infinite reduction, and even of cancellation, and he had restored Germany to equality of status in the Euro-

pean system. It was true that, while parts of her territory were still in enemy occupation and she was paying a war indemnity, Germany was still formally "under servitude." But the conditions under which she now suffered occupation and paid indemnities amounted to a revision in her favour of the terms she had been forced to accept at Versailles. There had, it is true, been no restoration of territory; there could not be. But in no case had the concessions made to Germany been granted on terms of further loss or additional expression of acceptance of loss, except in the case of Alsace and Lorraine. The charge that Stresemann signed away German territory at Locarno is frivolously cynical; what he actually had done was to use an endorsement of a previous surrender of territory to extort a guarantee of German security that represented a clear advance on the settlement of 1919.*

In accepting a permanent League Council seat, Germany had *consented* to accept equality not as a concession extorted from others, but as a right of which she had had to be convinced that it was wise to avail herself, and had obtained the right, or rather accepted the obligation, to transfer all possible questions, present or future, which might involve her in international complications away from a victors-vanquished conference from which resort to force might be had to an international forum whose reason for existence was the prevention of the use of force as a means of egress from a political *impasse*. As a recognized Great Power, she had her special privileges, privileges denied to many of her ex-enemy co-signatories to the Peace Treaty, and had recovered full freedom of action within the Covenant to which she could now appeal on any issues that might arise. She could, if desirable, arraign the treaty settlement point by point and reach a new settlement in safety by diplomatic means. Supreme at last within her own frontiers—except for the temporary occupation of the Rhineland—she had now a possibility of altering them by legal

* I pass over the demilitarized zone question, for in its case we have to deal with psychological *imponderabilia*. Politically and militarily, the demilitarized zone is as much in Germany's interest as in France's; the German critics' conclusions to the contrary are hopelessly distorted, because their premises are fundamentally neither political nor military. The Saar question was then a minor question. No one in 1927 had any doubts as to the result of the plebiscite; it was left to the super-German Hitler to create them.

means, and of equal co-operation in any other change that might affect her relations with any other Member-State on a footing precisely similar to that enjoyed by her permanent colleagues on the Council. The long intrigue that delayed her entry was proof positive of the new strength which that entry was recognized to confer upon her.

In short, Stresemann's achievement was one of liberation. The proof thereof lay in the fact that by 1927 Germany was beginning politically and economically to recover, for recovery is impossible to a nation so conscious of defeat and "servitude" as to be incapable of effort. Later the settlement was to be described as chains and slavery; then men talked of victory, and Germany held her head high again because it was victory.

But the limitation of Stresemann's definition of fulfilment as applied to his policy must be clearly recognized. In a now notorious letter to the ex Crown Prince—like the good bourgeois he was Stresemann had his little vanities, and it gave him genuine, if not very lofty, pleasure to be known as "Uncle Gustav" in a Hohenzollern household—he paraphrased a remark of Metternich after Wagram to the effect that now Austria must confine herself to finesse and avoid decisions. Why so obvious a remark should have raised a storm of controversy about Stresemann's "honesty" it is difficult to see.* The meaning of it is perfectly plain. Germany, having distinguished between the possible and the impossible, would now have to adopt the policy of the gentleman with the weak hand and combine skill and bluff not to win the game, but to save the rubber—a highly moral proposition, except to those who regarded card playing as immoral, and as intelligible as it is intelligent. At the risk of being tedious one must emphasize that the Locarno policy meant, and had failed if it did not mean, revision. It was not, was never intended to be, and was never held to be even by the other side, a surrender. It merely precluded—and that not absolutely—revision by aggressive war. In deliberately pursuing a policy of

* On reading this letter, Baron Beyens called him a man "devoid of scruples in the manner of Bismarck." If so cool an observer as Beyens could call him that, the rag, tag, and bobtail may be forgiven for calling him worse.

revision, including territorial revision, Stresemann was not only "honest," but he was being perfectly loyal to the Locarno spirit. The position is clear. By the Locarno Treaty formally nothing had been achieved, save a non-aggression pact in the west; by the Locarno negotiations the settlement imposed at Versailles had been in principle robbed of sacrosanctity.

There were four points at issue as a result—the territorial boundaries of Germany, reparations, the occupation, and disarmament. Of these the second and third were survivals from the past, destined to speedy disappearance. There was nothing novel or exceptional about them. A war indemnity has always been one of the time-honoured methods of making emphatic an enemy's defeat, and armed occupation is merely the police-work in connection with its payment. There is nothing exceptionally humiliating politically, though there may be sentimentally, about either. No particular stigma attaches to indebtedness, nor to the process of recovery for debt. A man summoned for arrears of income tax suffers in pride, and may, though improbably, suffer socially, but he loses no jot or tittle of his rights as a citizen. The difference between the Versailles and the Dawes-Locarno settlements was the difference between a moral and a legal judgment. By the former Germany had not only been adjudged a debtor, but she had been deprived of the right of citizenship in the new world commonwealth. By the latter that right had been restored to her. She was now in a state not of moral delinquency but of financial debt, a state out of which there were those obvious roads of escape which are open to any debtor.

That was the reality of the situation and the formal maintenance of the Versailles text, or rather the failure to supersede that text by another, could not alter it or make it less real. Anything else was a matter of pure prestige, and on questions of pure prestige it is difficult for the mentally balanced to have any great sympathy for either side—for the French in childishly maintaining the war-guilt clause, or for the Germans in breaking childish hearts over it. In 1927 that clause was by the sheer logic of facts as *démodé* in the political sphere as the Ptolemaic system

in the astronomical sphere, and every thinking German, when he did think, knew that it was.*

It was other with the territorial settlement and with disarmament. The latter, on which so much ink has been spilled that it is now almost impossible to distinguish the original problem, was a measure of precaution, partly a police and partly a political measure. To represent the disarmament clauses of the Versailles Treaty as laying down a general and obligatory course of conduct for Europe is silly. The case for European disarmament does not, and never can, rest on that treaty. These chapters were aimed at and intended to be applicable only to Germany; and their "fulfilment," if dependent formally on law, depended in fact on force. They were emphatically a "servitude," and they could not in the actual state of development constitute a *moral* obligation on Germany, though many Germans have never ceased to insist that their preamble constitutes a moral obligation upon everyone else. There was here no question of any moral guilt incurred by non-fulfilment; the only question was whether defiant non-fulfilment was politically wise. There is no doubt whatever that from 1919 onwards "Germany" deliberately and systematically violated the disarmament settlement. The wisdom or unwisdom of such violation is arguable. What is certain is that after Locarno such violation was not merely criminally unwise, but that it was contrary to the whole spirit of the new settlement and to the declared policy of a government which depended for the success of its diplomacy on its acceptance by the Allied governments as at least 50 per cent truthful. Yet, thanks to the efforts of certain highly placed officials and politicians, with the connivance and even the direct co-operation of government departments, Germany was not merely violating the text of the *disarmament* clauses, but was actually *re-arming* under cover of a new agreement which made armed intervention—for which there was a clear case—almost impracticable. The re-arming carried on before Locarno and that pursued afterwards may not be two different things, but they are most certainly in

* I maintain this paragraph in face of bitter protest from one who knows Germany better than I do.

two different categories. From the point of view of German interests, if the former was romantically patriotic the latter was stupidly the reverse. How far Stresemann had definite knowledge of these individual activities it is not possible to say. The present weight of evidence is that he did not know the extent to which illegality was officially countenanced, and such unconnected details as he did know were viewed by him solely from the point of view of their possible effect on his foreign policy's chances of success. This is not to impugn his good faith; it was at least arguable whether this or that detail did actually constitute a breach of the treaty,* and whether, even if formally they were not in harmony with its provisions, they did not constitute legitimate measures of national defence. Stresemann never seems to have taken what reports were made to him, nor "revelations" very seriously, and certainly took no heroic measures of investigation. His dismay when later Briand made them the excuse for a period of non-co-operation was very genuine, but it was the dismay not of the culprit caught, but of the friend wrongfully accused, a dismay which is inexplicable if it did not rest on the belief that Briand, for reasons of French policy, was treating as fact that which he had no real ground for holding was fact. Yet fact it was, and when, later on, the French were actively hindering the carrying out of the policy of reconciliation, the impartial student, however justly he may criticize French intransigence, cannot but regard it as justificatory fact.

Of the whole treaty the territorial clauses were those which—and rightly—aroused the bitterest resentment, and yet it is just here that the "malevolence" of the Allies, if most apparent, was least real. The territorial clauses marked a stage in a long historical process, and if for that reason acquiescence in them appeared impossible for Germany, acquiescence in any revision of them appeared just as impossible for the *beati possidentes*; it was indeed generally recognized that change would and could

* There is an easy instance. By the treaty Germany was forbidden to possess tanks, one of the most valuable of the new offensive weapons of war. It is certain that in 1927 she did not possess tanks. It is equally certain that she did possess parts which could easily be assembled into tanks. There is nothing whatever said about "parts" in the treaty. The chance for the casuist is obvious.

only be made by war. It was that recognition that, from the point of view of what is called "the new Europe," made Germany a menace, for it was regarded as historically inevitable that she would proceed to forcible frontier rectification the moment she believed that force could be successfully used. It was here that Locarno was so supreme a European achievement and so supreme a German achievement. Loyally observed, it preserved Europe from war, and yet gave Germany the possibility of rectification by peaceful means. It is true that that possibility was not an immediate one, but then the possibility of the use of force was equally not immediate. *Any* change was inevitably postponed to a relatively late date; the point was that between Locarno and the League the machinery existed for negotiating change the moment any sort of opportunity arose. In that change the recognition of the maintenance of the *status quo* in the west conferred at a minimum of sacrifice additional freedom on Germany for negotiation in the east. Still more important from the "national" point of view was the fact that—given some skill in diplomacy greater than Bethmann's—it banished the spectre of a war on two fronts. Except from the realist military point of view which regards treaties as capable of legal cancellation by the mere, if illegal, recourse to arms the Locarno settlement was a superb gain.

Historically considered, a treaty sums up the *status quo* as it exists at the conclusion of the treaty; politically speaking, therefore, a treaty is out of date the moment after its signature. The Treaty of Versailles, however, concluding as it did a war not of governments supported by their peoples but of peoples driven on by forces which the governments had conspicuously failed to control, was an attempt not so much to give legal expression to a settlement which the war had made as to settle the lines of future development; that it is why it is occasionally and quite rightly accused of idealism. It was not intended to mark the end of a war so much as the beginning of a new period of development, and to supply a basis for it. Revision, therefore, for Germany was not so much a question of prestige or of legalism as a condition of existence, for no nation, even the smallest, can submit

to have its future development settled for it even by a world areopagus, or to resign itself to exclusion from participation in the development of the continent to which it belongs. This is the real case for revision, the case which the controversialists on either side do so much to obscure, and this is the case which was admitted at Locarno.

It was revision in this sense which Stresemann had achieved, a revision which was a necessary preliminary to any revision of detail, and actually of far greater importance than the cancellation of reparations or the return of the Corridor, for by it either or both of these was brought within the bounds of rational possibility. Nothing is more condemnatory of the mentality of the anti-treaty protagonists in Germany than their insistence on the historically trivial, because it was the sentimentally important to the neglect of the politically important, because it was not capable of sentimental exploitation. To them, simply because they had no time-sense, there were only two courses possible—to fight or to hold their peace. They were for different reasons quite incapable of doing either; the folly of refusing to take the latter course when they could not take the former they never saw. If it was true that the Franco-German quarrel was a secular permanent feud, then it was a case of the ultimate annihilation of one or other nation. What more futile policy then than to seek to persuade the enemy that it was such a struggle and at the same time to present him with the perfect case for a preventive war at the very moment when its outcome was quite certain? In 1925 when the anti-treaty pack were in full cry and inviting war nothing could have been more safely prophesied than that war would have meant the wiping of Germany from the map of Europe. The only sane course was Thiers': "Think, but never speak"; but the sane course has never been popular in a Germany which likes to disguise political ineptitude by calling it Faustian action. A little later, still in full cry, the same pack bellowed out their refusal to believe that revision was accomplished when Stresemann had accomplished it, and yet they proceeded to clamour for the "fulfilment" of the revision which they denied he had won, but which they claimed had been promised by the Allies.

They rejected Locarno fundamentally as obligatory on Germany; they spent their waking hours accusing the Allies of not "fulfilling" the Locarno pledges.

The situation can be psychologically explained. It was consciousness of the impossibility of action rather than the demerits of Locarno that so roused the "national" parties, but as they could not bear to admit the former they concentrated on the latter. The obvious fact was that Germany could not pursue an independent foreign policy of the old-fashioned sort because she was a weak, not because she was a disarmed, power. Morally and economically she was incapable of backing policy with force which ultimately is what is meant by pursuing an independent foreign policy. Ignoring all that, the "national" elements blamed Locarno for not restoring Germany to her normal pre-war position of a *de facto*—not a *de jure*; that had never been denied—Great Power. They blamed Locarno, which was a beginning, for not being an end. In the year of grace 1926 they wanted the Treaty of Versailles to be as much politically a thing of the past as the Treaty of Frankfurt was, say, in 1880, ignoring the fact that Germany after the Locarno conferences could not possibly be in the same political state as France was after the Conference of Berlin, ignoring the fact that 1927 was not 1880, and that merely because there had been forty-seven years of development it was quite impossible, "servitude" apart, for Germany to treat the question of Austria or the Ukraine as France had treated the question of Tonkin or Tunis. Germany's freedom of action was not merely limited by the Versailles "servitudes"; it was limited by the fact of the actual development, intellectual, social, and political, of Europe. How far intelligent Nationalists had recognized that is seen by the fact that in 1927 they decided to ignore the "servitudes" and support the Stresemann policy of bearing them; how little the unintelligent and the malignant had realized it is seen by the increased frenzy with which the campaign against the treaty was now to be carried on as if it, and it alone, set limits to the megalomaniac ambitions inherited from the worst representatives of the system that ultimately bore the responsibility for it. It is hard but necessary for a convinced opponent

of the Versailles settlement to admit that the supreme political justification of it lies in the spirit and method of the German "national" opposition to it.

The policy pursued by Stresemann has been called the policy of the gentleman with the weak hand; he himself called it the "as if" policy, the policy of presuming that, within the limits set by history to any policy, Germany was both free and able to pursue an independent policy, and going ahead with it. Of that policy the lines, though not clear to many of his contemporaries, were clear enough to him. All were agreed that the treaty burden having been made definite, the next task was that of getting rid of it altogether. This is not a "national" or even a "National Socialist" policy; it was and is the only policy that any German statesman ever has had, though it has been more or—and generally—less skilfully applied. The shrill shrieking of the "national" politicians who asked that application should take the form of sheer defiance coupled with a diplomacy of bluff and bullying came from men irresponsible in all senses of the word; it was of all possible applications that least calculated to attain the end in view, and it is significant that on gaining political if no other kind of responsibility they dare not resort to their own pet application, but carried on the old application with sheer servility coupled with a diplomacy of deceit and Uriah Heepism.

The policy, as Stresemann conceived and applied it, was at once clear as to its end, and eminently patriotic. It was much more than a policy of "as if," as he so characteristically termed it. From 1923 to 1926 the description had a certain wry aptness; by 1927 Germany was indeed a weak Power, but she had acquired a strength of prestige and a security within the League of Nations which did enable her to pursue, perhaps not an independent policy in the old sense, but certainly a policy which was independent of foreign pressure. In the frenzied attack on the League because it was international and so not "national," the reactionary character of the nationalist outlook was plainly revealed. Their hostility was directed against the still inchoate new order. To Stresemann, on the other hand, the fact that there was a new order in process of formation was the one guarantee of Germany's

future. In a real sense the Locarno settlement was the true peace treaty that marked the end of the war by an agreed peace. It gave a guarantee in his eyes that it would be possible to secure the complete rehabilitation of his country without upsetting either Germany or Europe. He attached in 1927 only a relative importance to the practical realization of the paper gains of Locarno, although he never minimized the importance to ordered political development in Germany of the removal of the outward evidences of "servitude" and the reduction of the financial burden. But what he was looking to was the time in the very near future when the relations established at Locarno would have so improved that the other signatories would see in revision not a menace to their security but a condition of it in the resulting pacification of Europe. To that extent his was a moderate nationalist programme, such as the intelligent wing of the Nationalist party finally found no difficulty in supporting. But its significance lay in the fact that in his conception it looked far beyond the purely nationalist end. It had a moral basis which was different from that of the crude nationalism that usurped the name of patriotism in Germany. It saw in internationalism the supreme means whereby true nationalism could attain its end, an end not of domination but of service. He was already moving beyond that political pacifism which estimates correctly that, under modern conditions, war is a wasteful, dangerous, and, on the whole, unsatisfactory method of realizing national aims, towards that deeper pacifism which no longer regards the avoidance of war as an end in itself and makes the negative maintenance of peace the criterion of all policy, but which seeks to render war anachronistic by the establishment of a system of ordered co-operation.* He had reached a new definition of revision; it was not merely the restoration of past conditions, but the creation of new conditions. In that creation he felt that, just because she was relatively impotent, just because she was temporarily under

* It should, one hopes, be unnecessary to point out that Stresemann never was in any sense a Quaker or a peace-at-any-price pacifist. His pacifism was purely intellectual and political; into it there did not enter the religious element nor the element of selfishness, cowardice, or conceit.

"servitude," Germany was called to play a leading part, for of all powers she had the most to gain by the establishment of an international system within which her national aims would be made capable of realization just because it had ceased to be of vital national importance that they should be realized. To him the League was to his hand as an instrument; when he declared that the League was the keystone of German foreign policy he meant precisely what he said. His fundamental difficulty was that his policy was a long-term policy that could not yet be formulated as a definite policy, or be pursued frankly on a straight clear path. He knew well that although the goal of his and the Nationalist policy was one and the same, his reasons for it, his hopes of it, his choice of route to its goal, and his ultimate conception of its results, were so different from theirs that it would be difficult to convince them of that identity. It would be no recommendation to intransigent nationalism that the route he had chosen was that which was appealing to the best minds in Europe, and that by choosing it Germany would be assuming the intellectual leadership of political Europe. It was not the best minds of Europe who were its influential minds, and he was well aware that he was caught in the trammels of the necessity to have to give continuous proof of the success of his policy by securing revision as revision was understood by the average German.

Evidence of revision must therefore be obtained *pari passu* with any progress towards the great goal of European reconstruction. Concrete proof must be afforded the German of "national" success, and yet any such success depended on the fact that he had convinced the average Frenchman that it was innocuous. He saw only one way of escape from this initial impasse from which egress threatened to be impossible, and that was through a frank policy of Franco-German co-operation within the limits permitted to frankness within the League—that very co-operation whose possibility had rather alarmed a few far-sighted students as early as 1925; for under the aegis of League prestige—and League prestige at the moment stood high—the policy of the weak hand could be fruitful because within the League,

where Germany stood among the *primi inter pares*, its weakness was not so apparent.

The "servile" position of Germany which precluded her standing alone made Stresemann grasp one possibility of development. If the League was what it ought to be, and indeed what it claimed to be, a great international parliament, it would sooner or later develop a legislative power of its own. As it developed that, the parallel creation of what would correspond to the party system in a parliamentary state would also develop. At the moment, without any legislative power at all, temporary differences of opinion produced *ad hoc* parties, and any sustained division of opinion tended to turn them into more than that.* It was not simply that he saw—the idea was also present in the minds of many mediocre statesmen—that in the formation of parties a state might discriminatingly, selfishly, and profitably participate; he looked far beyond mere lobbying, beyond a system of *ad hoc* alliances as at present favoured, to the formation of a true party, and in his search for it he found fresh justification for what he was seeking to make the basis of German foreign policy. In this development he saw the stage on which Franco-German co-operation could work openly. In it he saw the process whereby the new European commonwealth could be substituted for the existing European treaty system, already a system of fearsome complexity. He saw the League as the directing international body in embryo; he saw Western European civilization as the sole basis and condition of any true internationalism, and he deduced from that, for historical reasons even if they were also sentimental reasons, that the Bismarckian system of juggling with alliances must be rejected in favour of the unity of the western democracies. It was here that he ceased to be simply a German statesman as he realized that there was more at stake than the future of Germany, something at stake indeed which alone made it possible for Germany to have a future. To secure that future there must be a period when it would be necessary for the western powers to control development. There would

* The experience of the Disarmament Conference is eloquent in this connection.

have to be a democratic Concert of Europe, and, astonishing as it may seem to some but not to those who have followed not only his development but that of more than one German thinker, he had reached the conclusion that, in that Concert, France was not Germany's hereditary foe, but her natural ally. Italy he very properly disregarded as a second-class power got up to look like Goliath and at the mercy of any David, as a non-liberal power, and as a power whose only significance was in the use which other powers made of her. With Britain there could be no alliance, and only to a limited extent a real community of purpose, for Britain was not a European but a world power, and, although she had a vital interest in the maintenance of peace on the Continent, she would always tend to have a negative rather than a positive policy of European co-operation. As a German, he firmly believed that the Rhine is the heart of Europe,* and that he who possesses the Rhine dominates the Continent—a view, perhaps, not without its defects. If the Rhine powers who had hitherto for two millenia disputed its possession could form a party bound together by a mutual possession of it and transform a policy of mutual rivalry into one of mutual concession and mutual benefaction, he saw in that party the one sure basis of a European order, as he saw in the effort to form it the one sure condition for the attempt to create that order. It was in that sense that he saw the possibilities of Geneva. The Ruhr, Locarno, London, Thoiry—these were the stages that marked the development of his thought, of what indeed may be called his conversion, for it had very much the same psychological character as conversion, a conversion none the less sincere because he still believed that it had a sound nationalist foundation, to the idea of the solution of all problems by the creation of such a new order, to the idea of transforming the League by giving it as a new basis a true European League. To Briand the United States of Europe was half a myth of the Sorelian type, and half an additional guarantee of that security which can never have guarantees

* His "westernism" and his democratic belief is seen equally in his refusal to consider Russia as a real factor for Germany's European policy at a time when there was strong diplomatic support for a "Russia-wards" orientation.

enough; it was a French policy first, and a European policy second. To Stresemann it was the only practical German policy because in her own interests Germany must pursue first, last, and all the time, a European policy.

It was here that Stresemann broke away from the old-fashioned moderate nationalism that was his first republican love. He had now reached a definition of nationalism that in his view corresponded to the post-war period, and particularly to the actual moment of general *détente*. He never gave it that lapidary form which would have made it clear and beyond controversy; even the policy that was inspired by it was still incompletely formulated when he died. But it is not rash to say that the ultimate conviction on which both definition and policy rested lay at once in the acceptance of the contemporary trend towards that consolidation and solidarity of which the totalitarian state is the supreme parody; in the conviction that the condition of that consolidation which alone will ensure the survival and the development of Western civilization was the moral hegemony of a Liberal and—using the adjective in its positive sense—a pacifist Germany; and in the belief that, in securing that future, Germany would touch a greatness beyond the dreams of the headiest nationalism in a land where nationalism is perpetually in a state not merely of headiness, but of hysterical megalomania.

It is the fashion to say that in his progress towards that conception he ignored all those things that are the true determinants of development—economic rivalries, the class struggle, the intellectual and social conditions of the time—and because he ignored them, there was nothing left but disillusion and defeat. Putting aside the pseudo-scientificism of the charge, it amounts to nothing more than that he took an exaggerated view of the intelligence of his fellows. He probably did, not because he rated them too highly, but because he overestimated the persuasive powers of his own superb combativeness, and the spell-binding power of the great ideal he proposed to set before them. But, because he was fired with that conception, he felt it incumbent upon him to lead, and in his conception of leadership he was intellectually leagues ahead of all his critics.

Of those critics, and among his bitterest enemies in Germany, the majority had seen service in the field, and might even be said, some of them, to be scientific soldiers. He himself had never put on a uniform or handled so much as a rifle. But he had grasped in a way that not one of them had done, not even the three officers and one corporal who, as chancellors of the Reich, were to lead it to the abyss, the ancient maxim that the place of a general is with the advance guard and not with the baggage-train. And even had he lacked the imagination to conceive the magnificent conception that he did, his sense of reality alone would have told him that with any conception the sole chance of success for a statesman is to be ahead of his age. As a student with a good economics degree he rated the value of economics to the statesman as much less than the value of a sense of reality.

But it is also true that in the months prior to the formation of the Right coalition he had reached a juster estimate of the difficulties which he would have to encounter in this great effort at leadership. Characteristically enough when he saw them, when he realized that to infect men with his own enthusiasm would be difficult, and that it would be still more difficult for him to persuade them by argument that he was right in his policy, he attached more importance to French than to German perversity. He was not perhaps confident that he could convince his countrymen on the general issue; but he was confident that he could meet the criticisms of the moment and justify the general policy by individual successes. For the moment all he asked of them was that they should not hinder him, and he felt assured that he could give all but the irreconcilable reason not to do so. What he was now feeling was that, across the Rhine, there was no one who fully shared his view and would be prepared equally to accept the responsibility of leadership. There was a curiously deep sentimental affection between Stresemann and Briand, but it did not prevent either very shrewdly appraising the other. That appraisement, the appraisement of the statesman, came immediately after their sentimental affection had reached its height.

At Thoiry he had in more senses than one put his cards on the table, and his partner's acceptance of the gesture had for a

moment led him to believe that the interview had led literally to the consecration of two minds to a single thought. But Thoiry soon was seen to lead nowhere. It is often said that for him the net result of Thoiry was complete disillusion, that thereafter the dream faded and the policy became merely a hand-to-mouth policy of getting what could be got. That is not so. From the famous "idyll" he drew that last necessary encouragement that fixed the idealist policy in his own mind; from its immediate sequel he gained a salutary lesson against taking things for granted, and a due appreciation at once of the terrific strength of French nationalism, and the ease with which it assumes the disguise of internationalism. By 1927 he had come to realize that it would be more difficult to find a majority for a Stresemann policy in France than it would be to find one in Germany, and that he would have to suit his method to that realization. The *salutary result* of Thoiry, as far as he was concerned as foreign minister of Germany, was that he had to admit that it was not only a case of convincing the French of the wisdom of the Franco-German unity of which he dreamed, but that he would have to fight positively to prevent the French turning dream and dreamer to French advantage. He learned after Thoiry that, in addition to France which no less than other nations held "idealists," chauvinists, and internationalists in equal numbers, there was a French system which actually existed as a rival to his own plan for the reconstruction of Europe. The challenge was not merely a spur to courage; it was a clarifying agent of thought.

Much has been written about Thoiry and to little purpose, the commentators varying from accusing both protagonists of sheer bad faith to regretting once again that they were both grossly ignorant of economics. Thoiry was and remained even after the disillusion a symbol; he never really conceived of it as an agreement. He did, indeed, believe when he took leave of Briand that he could count on being given definite tangible evidence of support, without having perpetually to specify and fight for the particular item of support he wanted, and he was quick to realize his own credulity. But to him Thoiry was always

and supremely important because it was a symbol of the *type* of co-operation that he envisaged. The mere fact that such an intimate personal interview was possible excited quite a number of sober and even calloused observers, and it certainly excited Stresemann. But he, no more than Briand, was duped by his partner; unlike that weary idealist, he duped himself not as to the nature or scope of the interview, but as to its consequences. His own enthusiasm at this colourful climax to a long series of successes made him believe for the moment that Briand not only shared his ideal—which was on the whole true—but had endorsed in detail his plan of realizing it—which was completely untrue. Coming after Locarno, whose spirit by 1926 had become something of almost religious significance, it did not occur to him that Briand more or less took for granted that Stresemann was infected with the same fundamental scepticism as himself, and knew well enough that no one, and especially the French, had any particular belief in the Locarno spirit, and very little in the Locarno settlement. He did not expect Stresemann to take his facile concurrence in the great ideal as a matter of practical politics. For a moment, but only for a moment, Stresemann did. Confusing the tentative with the settled, vaulting imagination o'erleaped itself. He convinced himself in that moment of triumphant enthusiasm that actually he could count on the French supplying concrete concessions wherewith to convince his countrymen in order to help him to create the new European order. A few weeks convinced him of his error, but there was no fundamental disillusionment; no one less than he needed advice on how to fight Giant Despair. In 1927 his faith was not dimmed; it was indeed a quieter, but it was also a stronger faith, because in the new realization of the obstacles before him he saw the greater need of faith now that there was no possibility left of escaping patient toil, merely to lay the foundations of the edifice which it was at once his ideal and his policy to erect. Thoiry was not crippling; it was truly salutary. He turned from the dream to the business, to the task not of awaiting concession but of making it necessary, of retaining the support of his people for a policy of patience, to the task of the statesman. He saw the

distant goal as clearly as ever; he saw more clearly the immediate task and how to do it, and he did not believe it to be beyond his powers, while doing it, to keep Europe convinced of his own and Germany's sincerity in pursuing a policy of reconciliation, peace, and co-operation, and to keep his own countrymen convinced that, as they held strongly by it, they conferred on Germany increased freedom, increased prestige, and increased power.

CHAPTER V

THE OPPOSITION TO "STRESEMANNISM" AND THE NEW EXTREMISM

IT was not merely the fact that the Stresemann policy had been victorious that had induced the Nationalists to reconsider their whole position. They were indeed very far from appreciating the nature, much less acknowledging the extent, of the victory gained, but they could on occasion be objective enough to see that the German nation was in a very different position morally and even materially from the position in which she had been in 1924, and equally that the relations between the European powers had entered a new phase, and that, if in that new phase Germany was to gain advantages, factious opposition must cease. The leaders responsible for the decision had indeed not anticipated having to give a blank cheque to the foreign minister, but their reluctance to do so had been largely overcome by what had been happening in those weeks of tortuous negotiation. From the point of view of the public the question of admission to the League had dominated nearly the whole of 1926, but that public had not missed the significance of the return to power in France of "the villain of the Ruhr" (Cabinet of National Unity, July 1926). Although Poincaré's mission was to resolve the French financial crisis, the conduct of foreign affairs could not but be affected. It was this fact rather than the "disillusionment of Thoiry" that made Stresemann realize that the policy of reconciliation was emphatically a long-term policy whose comprehensiveness, and so vagueness, would make no appeal to the niggling legalist from Lorraine. Instead of friendly discussions in which definite points could be raised naturally, the definite points would become the objects of a formal diplomatic battle. That was the reason why the Stresemann policy "stiffened" and to the joy of the Right became what they called realist. The idealism still remained, and, as far as Stresemann was concerned, the idealist end remained, but to the nation at large the idealism in

his public utterances was merely rhetoric suited to the times, and the reality was the insistence on evacuation and the re-examination of the indemnity burden. Stresemann had done all in his power to avoid the issue being narrowed down to such limited concreteness, but once it was plain to him that narrowing down was inevitable he had to frame public policy to suit the new and less favourable conditions.

Just when the intriguing and argument of the party executives was at its height, Briand, replying to French criticisms, put the issue in a way that Stresemann was forced to accept. He denied that any pledges had been given at Thoiry or elsewhere to permit an early evacuation of the Rhineland. Any such evacuation ahead of the treaty limits was entirely Germany's concern, for evacuation would automatically follow "fulfilment." It was therefore for Germany to make proposals, and so far Germany had not done so. On February 1 the Inter-Allied Control Commission left Germany after some wearisome negotiation about fortresses whose outcome profoundly alarmed—without alarming the public—technical military opinion. The withdrawal of the Commission, in itself a relief, could be interpreted as at least a negative expression of the Allied opinion that Germany had "fulfilled" the disarmament clauses, and certainly, making the completion of "fulfilment" at least arguable, afforded plausible ground for opening further negotiations. In these negotiations the Nationalist party, which had made the failure to secure evacuation the whole burden of their latter condemnation of Locarno, could not but support the foreign minister, and the possibility of their being soon opened supplied the best argument of the thinking minority in favour of participation in the government. The declaration of the new cabinet put their case well:

All the members of the cabinet are unanimously resolved to go on on the path that has been chosen, and to work for the political and economic reconstruction of Germany and so of Europe through the honourable determination to secure understanding and co-operation with other nations. On that path there lies behind us the liberation of the Ruhr, the evacuation of the First Zone, and the departure of the Control Commission. . . . On

that path there lie still before us difficult tasks to whose accomplishment we shall have to devote all our energies, for hard toil is still necessary in order to win back for our nation that place of moral and political equality which is its fit place among other nations. In the foreground is the task of recovering the right to exercise full sovereignty within our own frontiers. So long as the Second and Third Zones in the Rhineland remain occupied by foreign troops, the position there constitutes a permanent source of danger to the happy development of relations with our Western neighbours, and is not in harmony with the work of Locarno. The government must expect that as a result of the accomplishment of that task the policy of mutual understanding will be made secure.

If the Nationalists set all the emphasis on the immediate tasks, they were no less right, they were merely narrower, than Stresemann, who privately put all the emphasis on the larger task of understanding and co-operation. It was a mere matter of chronology that the tasks referred to were immediate; that immediacy was not inherent in them.

From the national point of view the foreign political issue, however, narrowed down to these, and it was here that Stresemann counted on success to secure still more fully the adhesion of the nation to the long-term policy. He had behind him a formidable parliamentary majority, and an almost united people; from what quarters and in what strength might he now expect opposition? Now that it was abundantly clear that, if there was success, there would be no opposition worth considering, what forces, what figures would be the rallying point of national opposition, if success was not forthcoming?

Although the opposition made foreign policy the avowed object of its attack, both on Left and Right the fundamental object of its hostility was the democratic republic. As far as the general aim was concerned, all the extremists were united; they differed only in the lengths to which they were prepared to carry violence, and in the nature of the regime which they proposed to substitute for parliamentary democracy. On the Left were the Communists, who sought a proletarian dictatorship: on the Right, the irreconcilable wing of the Nationalists, who wanted to restore autocratic class rule and the anti-everything

groups who wanted a "Fascist" dictatorship. Official Nationalism having compromised, and in compromise taken the bulk of the party with it, these elements, mutually hostile not so much on policy as for reasons of personal ambition, were now to bid against one another for the leadership of the "national" movement, which at no other time in the history of the republic was so unnational, so discredited, and so impotent.

The final decision to recognize the republic—as we saw a decision pushed through by a minority—came at the end of a longish period of bitter dissension, during which two pronouncements of importance were made. The Pan-German League, a solemn veteran which had learned nothing in forty years, appealed to the party not to shake hands with treason—it had never objected to shaking hands with murder, nor ever did—and the Stahlhelm, the biggest of the ex-servicemen's associations, warned them that from Baghdad to the Marne the dead would rise from their graves to remind them for what those dead had died. The Pan-German League meant Hugenberg; the Stahlhelm meant Seldte, neither of them beloved by the bulk of the aristocratic leadership, but ruefully acknowledged as men with power.

Alfred Hugenberg, whose record for political intransigence and political stupidity is almost unique in German politics, combined the appearance of a hoary, genial, but beardless Santa Claus with ruthless greed of power, unscrupulousness in method, and profound contempt for that large section of the Nationalist leaders whose long tradition still inhibited them from adopting the moral standards of big business. The son of a Treasury official in the old kingdom of Hanover which was wiped from the map of Europe the year after his birth, the descendant of an old but never important family of landed gentry of the Weser valley, he eventually reached Goettingen and got his doctorate for a thesis on internal colonization in north-east Germany, a very long, very dull, but not unmeritorious piece of special pleading in favour of de-urbanization and land settlement as a patriotic duty. Colonies thereafter haunted him like a spectre; his first appearance in public life was to protest against the exchange of Zanzibar for Heligoland, an act of some courage, for it cost him

his position in the civil service. One of the first members of the old Pan-German League, he was the untiring advocate of expansionism everywhere, and particularly by the dispossession of unfortunate Poles from their holdings in Prussia, in 1907 resigning a high official post because the Ministry of the Interior would not admit the possibility of a general policy of expulsion. His admitted success as an administrator and his furious, unreasoning "patriotism" secured him a seat on the board of Krupps, a congenial place where the more tempestuously rose the waves of provocative nationalism the swifter flowed in the orders for armaments. At last business and political interests were happily wedded. What he considered to be the ghastly errors in the political conduct of the war led him to a new decision; as the economists and the soldiers had been worsted by the politicians, it was time that big business went into politics seriously. He determined to become not a statesman but a political leader.* Like Hitler, he had been immensely impressed with the achievements of a foreigner who had never hidden his light under a bushel, but had added reflectors and magnifiers; his method of approach to power as a politician was to seek to become Germany's Northcliffe. After much trouble he collected the necessary capital and succeeded in obtaining a controlling interest in a publishing company; in ten years' time he was a newspaper king, controlling dozens of papers, dailies, weeklies, and monthlies, film companies, advertising agencies, publicity houses, and all the machinery for national propaganda. Returned to the Constituent Assembly and at every subsequent election, he was hailed by the Nationalist leaders as a most useful servant. It was that that never ceased to rankle; he had entered politics not to serve but to lead, and the patronizing attitude of the official leadership roused in him all that heavy destructive rage which fills superior talent when it is inhibited from asserting its superiority before the social assumptions of less able men. Of his great business talent there is no doubt; his organizations served his every interest

* It may be remarked that, if the republic had not been established, and so opened careers to all the talents, there would not have been that amazing unanimity on the part of the Hugenbergs and the Hitlers to "take up politics."

admirably, and under a democratic regime he was a far more powerful man than any East Prussian Junker. A very serious student of the science of propaganda, he had not that fundamental contempt for the demagogue that characterized his better-born colleagues; he realized that if demagogy rarely can create, it can most certainly influence creation, and he had a shrewder sense than any other Nationalist leader of the potential strength of the extreme "national" movement. From the first he had taken his stand on unwavering, uncompromising opposition to the Republic, and in the conversion of a majority of the leadership to the necessity not merely of temporizing with the new regime, but of acknowledging it, he saw a supreme chance and took it. He had led a minority even in 1925 against the Nationalists entering the government; he had taken the lead not only in denouncing the Stresemann policy, but in the subtler task of rousing the middle class by prophesying even greater economic loss through a combination of cowardly surrender on reparations and a rapacious radical economic policy. As one biographer puts it, he was the "inconvenient Cassandra" of the Nationalist party. In ancient days Cassandra relied on Apollo; control of all the resources of propaganda makes a modern Cassandra much more powerful than all Homer's pantheon, and the Nationalist leadership became uneasily conscious that its protégé had acquired not merely independence, but power. He was in 1926 already a rival leader. The manifesto of the Pan-German League made that rivalry defiant; from now on he was not a lieutenant, but the head of a section in open revolt and competition for control. There was no possibility of ignoring the danger to the party in general, and in particular to the actual leadership, and taken in conjunction with the parallel revolt of the Stahlhelm, the Hugenberg defiance seemed to threaten with a real split what had held itself to be the most coherent and disciplined party in Germany. It was the presence of Hugenberg with his matchless resources, resources that the leadership sadly admitted were personal, not party resources, that made the Stahlhelm dangerous; there was little danger in smiling, chubby, commonplace Franz Seldte.

Just forty-five, and so seventeen years younger than Hugenberg,

Seldte was an even humbler bourgeois than his ally. The son of an oil refiner in Magdeburg, he wanted to be a soldier, but he had to go into the business to take the place of a father who died while he was still a boy, and so in 1914 he entered the army as an amateur. Like one to whom he was later to be a formidable opponent, he was a machine-gun officer, outstanding for courage and endurance even in that picked corps, came out of the Somme with a useless left arm, but managed to stay in active service till almost the very end of the war. Like so many of his generation, and particularly those whom intellectual discipline had not made critical of their own emotionalism, he had surrendered himself wholly to the mystical communion of the front-line experience—his books on the war are full of it—and when the collapse came his one thought was to save its sense of comradeship for the nation, the nation, of course, meaning those who believed that the revolution was treachery. Before 1918 was over, in the midst of that chaos of intrigue and civil strife, he founded his own peculiar league of ex-service men, the Stahlhelm. He had no knowledge of politics and no political education. He followed instinct and prejudice as blindly but less brutally and less ambitiously than Hitler, and the Stahlhelm, despite its rejection of the extreme conceptions of the murder gangs, soon was an object of suspicion to the republican authorities. After Rathenau's murder it was suppressed; from the ban it arose, its leader more intransigent, more convinced than ever that the war was not yet over either at home or abroad. The Stahlhelm had very high patronage, and princes walked in its ranks, but it was a thoroughly bourgeois body, and as such of priceless value to a Nationalist party which knew that it must draw its coming majority from other classes than its own. Seldte was therefore, like so many of his type, a special pet of the Nationalist leadership which stoutly defended his association in parliament, and saw to it that funds did not lack. With the reaction from the Republic it grew formidably, and its demonstrations were a feature of those furious months in which Stresemann hacked his way to victory. It had been in the forefront of the resistance to him, the bitter opponent of Nationalist acknowledgment of the Republic and

now at the turning of the ways it, too, went into unrestrained opposition to the new development of Nationalist policy. In itself it could do little. Seldte was honest enough and important enough, but he was both in ability and personality second-rate. But as Hugenberg's ally he became of almost sinister import.

Despite their records, both these associations enjoyed the respect of a large section of the citizenry, and they formed a rallying point which was at once picturesque and dangerous for all those who disliked republicanism. But for the moment anti-republicanism was in the background; it was not a living issue, and with great astuteness Hugenberg concentrated his propaganda against the Stresemann foreign policy on the chance that it would not realize its "national" aims. He had seen the true nature of a change in public opinion which deceived Stresemann and was much misinterpreted abroad, the change caused by the nature of political appetite which, so far from being sated, increases as its owner is fed. The day was past when the German nation would be content with small mercies. Each victory, instead of satisfying it, would make it more avid, would make postponement, even the obviously necessary postponement, of the next success, increasingly intolerable. The more the Stresemann policy was successful, the more public impatience would grow because it was not completely successful, and no one knew better than its author that complete success was relatively a long way off. Step by step success, which was all that at the moment could be anticipated, would in fact reinforce the opposition, not the foreign minister, and the mere existence of such reinforcement would stiffen the attitude of foreign nations, who would see in the impatience of the German people at the rate of progress evidence of the continued existence of "German imperialism." Because progress must be slow and because any progress would be made at the cost of bargaining and even concession, Hugenberg saw that national discontent would visit itself equally on the Nationalist leadership. As it did so, that leadership would be driven to revise its opinions, a revision very much after the hearts of the bulk of the party. When they did so, when they admitted that participation in the government had

been from the Nationalist point of view a failure, he and no one else would be the natural leader of the party. His was a sectional, personal manœuvre which had nothing to do with the national cause, though one can believe that he felt sincerely enough that his arrival to power would be better for Germany than the conquest of equality in Europe. But he interpreted Germany in a purely class sense. In the Nationalist party, as it had been in 1919, the old aristocracy had been more intransigent than the representatives of big business. By 1927 the former, in many respects a truly political class who are not to be judged wholly by their stupider elements, had come to see that in the hated Republic it might be possible for them to play the leading part, and after the election of Hindenburg, and the refutation of the old notion that the Republic was synonymous with national humiliation, they began gradually to perform one of their wonted feats of interpretation and identify the Republic with themselves as its ruling caste. Of their agrarian members, if some of the large landowners were among the least reconcilable, the majority of the smaller and of the model owners and the small farmers were in favour now of recognition of and co-operation with the republican regime. As what was to all intents and purposes a state-aided industry, agriculture naturally could not be identified as the basis of political hostility to the state as it was, and continue to expect its aid in the form of tariffs and subsidies. On the other hand, the big industrialists had begun to regard with supreme horror the consolidation of a regime which to them seemed to be steadily moving towards state-socialism. Many of them had no political views of any sort; they had on the whole welcomed the Republic, and curious as it may seem most of them had begun as Democrats, Populists, or Centrists—Rathenau and Stinnes are two striking examples. But with the reconstruction of industry, during and after the period of inflation and crisis, there was obviously a clear gulf between the interests of the small man on whose votes the centre parties depended and big business which gravitated steadily to the Right, ending up by forming a section within it which the ambition of Hugenberg made important. It was no more united a section than any federation of industrialists can be,

but it had a shrewd sense of common interest, and the signs of the times were all too plain. Once a true reparations settlement was reached, and Germany's economic position was at once clarified and consolidated in the light of that settlement, they would stand revealed as the most selfish of all interest parties, for they knew perfectly well that the measures taken by the republican regime with its formidable working and middle-class predominance would inevitably be in one sense or another anti-capitalist. It was imperative, therefore, at once to take the lead in opposing a settlement in advance and stake out a claim to the leadership of all those to whom burden-bearing was obnoxious. If the development which he foresaw did take place, Hugenberg, the leader of the section which had been right in its intransigence, would be the Nationalist party leader. But he would be no better off as a political force than before if he could not also be the leader of all the opponents of the settlement. It is this that explains the fury with which he led the opposition to the Young plan, and the vigour with which from 1927 onwards he contested the leadership of the "national" movement with all comers.

Among these comers would undoubtedly be the leaders titular or actual of the genuinely extremist groups whom we have seen poll astonishingly well in the first election of 1924, and have their poll halved in the second. The cleaning-up action of the regime in 1924 had seriously crippled the power of the reactionary gangs and dissolved the Freikorps as such, but it had not removed them as a factor in politics. Its "putschist" teeth being drawn effectively as a result of Hitler's fiasco, the "German Fighting Front"* had dissolved again into its component parts, many of which had disappeared altogether as organizations, including the National Socialist party, which had been banned. But the leaders remained, most of them having very sensibly refused to join Ludendorff and Hitler in their mad exploit, and all over the country they had preserved or created little revolutionary organizations of their own, some of a reasonable size with some hundreds of members, others with barely a dozen. Each owed allegiance to a local leader, each was under semi-military disci-

* *vide* p. 105

pline, and on the whole they were more little secret societies than political associations, meeting as conspirators, engineering private little plots and pursuing "traitors" with inexhaustible energy. They were definitely subversive, all of them. Some had ambitious programmes of horrific luridness, others had no programme at all save a desire for bloodshed and loot, and their only bond of unity was the common desire to upset the Republic and instal themselves as a "national" dictatorship of terror. Few of them had any plans beyond that, but as a plan what they had was comprehensive enough to take up an intelligence that was limited and a time that was not. They had learned nothing at all since 1923, and their leaders were the same gallant but murderous ruffians—at best—as they always had been, although they had co-opted some much more dubious elements whose service had not been in Poland or the Ruhr, but in the underworld of crime. They were entirely out of touch with the nation, leading a life apart, but they were not, or most of them were not, at all out of touch with certain high officials and certain individuals in the Nationalist party, the former seeing in them possible soldiers for a possible "Day," the latter hoping to make use of them if and when occasion arose. With the official Nationalist party all relations had been broken off; between them and the Stahlhelm there existed that jealous enmity which exists between the respectable and the cautious and the outlaw and the intemperate, while they looked on the average Nationalist as a craven who had made peace with treason. They were still "putschists" to a man when everyone else, including their headiest former associate, had given up any idea of a "putsch," but they had no clear idea of how, when, or why to make the "putsch," only a very clear idea of who was to profit by it when it was made. Disunited handfuls as they were, they were at the moment perfectly innocuous; at this stage they did not understand enough about politics to be of any advantage to either Hugenberg or Hitler, but they represented a sinister possibility against the day of wrath, whose coming in their several ways these gentlemen and their allies sought to hasten.

Some endeavour had been made, indeed, to combine the

"national" associations and leagues into a political unity, and under the aegis of Ludendorff's still mighty name it had been successful in forming a comprehensive party entitled the German National Socialist Party of Freedom, whose parliamentary representatives formed the Racist Bloc (*Voelkische Bloc*) on the extreme Right. It had, as we have seen, obtained a considerable electoral success in 1924, only to suffer disaster a few months later. The Bloc had neither unity nor importance; in parliament it was conspicuous only for odd bursts of wild rhetoric and a tendency to vote with the Communists. Its weakness reassured, while the crudities of its revolutionism revolted, official Nationalism, which had no gift of prophecy, nor could dream that it was about to suffer the domination of the most curious figure of contemporary history, and that its members were about to become the best agents of what was in essence a non-German movement, but which, for a period at least, was to be hailed by its partisans and by sycophants as the supreme expression of the German soul. Under Adolf Hitler, the murder gangs were to be called upon to play their last and their least honourable part in a tormented history.

The "hero" of the great "putsch" of November 9 had changed considerably since the day when, with foam-flecked lips, he had proclaimed himself chancellor and dictator of the German Reich. His stay in the fortress of Landshut had not been unpleasant—he was treated more as a guest than as a prisoner, such being the strange methods employed by Bavarian officialdom towards "national" participators in high treason—and it had restored his mental balance. From the high-souled patriot, whose fanaticism had gone perilously near dementia, he had become again the cunning, petty bourgeois, the *rusé* private of the line. In Landshut he occupied himself with writing his *apologia*, in terrible German and worse logic, a farrago made out of café political argument and the lower type of political pamphlet without a single original idea in it, distinguished by the naïveté of conceit and equally naïve contempt for less conceited people. In the writing of it he, like greater men, purged his soul of a lot of exceedingly poisonous stuff. After the purge he did not,

indeed, study—to presume him capable of study as opposed to mere assimilation is to rate his intellectual abilities too high—but he reflected, and the abiding reflection was how narrowly Adolf Hitler had escaped at the worst becoming a corpse, and at the best being flung out of his adopted country as an undesirable alien, which is what his sentence would have been in any normal court. With that as a basis, with the necessity for preserving himself for the sake of Germany as a fundamental condition, he revised all his dreams. Not by one whit had ambition abated, but it had become circumspect. He had never read *Killing no Murder*, though its title might serve as motto for much of his career, but he had reached the truth enunciated by its immortal if anonymous author, that tyrants accomplish their ends much more by fraud than by force, and he came out of Landshut a convinced opponent of “direct action,” cured of all desire to emulate the march on Rome, and with very clear ideas of the application of new methods. He came out to find himself almost forgotten, to encounter a cold world of traitors and enemies. His party, ended under its own name by the ban, was in pieces. He had instructed the faithful but blundering Rosenberg* at once to found a new party, the All-German National Association, which would at least keep the members of the banned party together. Rosenberg obeyed, but allowed the new Association to be swallowed up in the Party of Freedom. To Hitler, not consulted and informed too late, this was either crass stupidity or gross treachery, and his first act on release was to repudiate all fusions and proclaim his independence.

He had come to very definite conclusions as to the causes of the ludicrous fiasco of 1923. He bore—to the tragic cost of some

* Alfred Rosenberg, a Baltic German, by training an architectural engineer and for long an agent of the Russian emigration, was the chief inspirer of Hitler's Russian policy as outlined in *Mein Kampf* and its author's most submissive and so far meagrely rewarded henchman. His chief title to fame is reading Wellhausen's *History of the Hebrews* at the age of fourteen and deriving from it a complete philosophy of anti-Semitism. A lesser feat was the writing of the neo-manichaeist *Der Mythos des XX. Jahrhunderts*, an amazing hotchpotch which in its unfailing proof of the author's incapacity either to understand or to quote accurately what he read and of his utter lack of intellectual training puts him at the head of the “Great Pyramid” school.

of them—an undying grudge against all those, from the High Commissioner to the humble Freikorps man, who had "let him down," but he did not blame them so much as he blamed the faults of organization. The party which he had stolen from its founders with the same ease as he filched ideas from his associates, had not been under his control. He had been merely the leader at the apex of the party pyramid. In the new party the leader must be the base. The members, individually or as a party, must have no power whatever except that which was delegated to them by the leader himself. *Le parti c'est moi* is Hitler's contribution to German political theory and practice, the contribution that any gang leader could have made. He, rather than Mussolini, who has affinities with the mediaeval "tyrant," or Stalin, who is the apotheosis of the political "boss," is the supreme gangster of modern politics. The essence of Hitlerism, as of gangsterism, is the dominance of the leader. The real cause to him of the failure of the "putsch" was the multiplication of leaders and the absence of a gang. That mistake, at least, would never be made again.

He faced no easy task. He was himself suspect to the authorities, who had in his lack of national status an easy weapon against him, and the materials for the building up of the new type of party had been stolen from him. But the position really was not so desperate. In the Party of Freedom there was no constructive genius of any kind, and when ten days after its rout in the elections Hitler emerged from Landshut it was already in full dissolution. It was not difficult to collect old colleagues, and scarcely less difficult to get them to subscribe to the new doctrine of the one-man party, the essential preliminary and perhaps the essential condition, of the one-party state. Never afraid to go to as many Canossas as were expedient—if there ever were a Hitlerite Europe there could be no fitter capital—he hastened to allay official suspicion by tearfully confessing to authority that the "putsch" had been a ghastly blunder, that he was perfectly loyal to the state, and would seek only legal ways of making it truly "national," and that, unlike Ludendorff, who had just discovered that the Pope was the head of the Grand

Orient, he would never permit his party to be anti-clerical. The humiliation before the powers temporal and spiritual took some time to bring results; with obvious reluctance and insulting incredulity the ban on the party was eventually lifted in February 1925.

At the end of that month Hitler celebrated its resurrection at a great demonstration in Munich, at which there was a dramatic, carefully staged platform scene, in which Hitler reconcilingly shook hands with all the "traitors." The only important passage in a long speech of perspiring rhetoric was the end:

When a year has passed you shall pass judgment. If I have managed things well, all right; if I have managed them ill, I shall resign. *But till that time I lead the movement, and no one is to attempt to impose conditions upon me so long as I am responsible for decisions.** That responsibility I shall ceaselessly carry for all that happens. To this struggle of ours there are only two possible issues; either the enemy pass over our bodies or we do over theirs, and it is my desire that, if in the struggle I should fall, the Swastika banner be my winding-sheet!

It was received with frenzied applause by an audience which had no intention of submitting to such discipline, and which knew that only a few weeks before the orator had solemnly pledged his word that there would be no struggle such as would involve a necessity for winding-sheets. In all Germany not twenty thousand people either heard it, read it, or heard of it. But Hitler had come back, and the new party had arisen from the ashes of the old.

But it was a different party. How exactly Hitler envisaged its future is not clear; for long he seems to have hesitated between keeping it an *élite*, the new name for a gang, or making it a movement, but for the moment and for long after he was mainly taken up with keeping the gang subservient to himself. It was not an easy task. Unlike Mussolini, he was not the founder of the party, but a late-comer to it. He had never been a Freikorps man; among their leaders were men who did not easily stomach authority, and it took time to collect personal adherents and use

* Italics mine.

them to crush ambitious resistance on the part of those Freikorps leaders who from now on began to join him. The original organization, apart from the military formations which he founded as a commentary on his pledge that never would he use force, consisted of a party that was full of rebellion, and a gang that was full of intrigue. What he meant by leadership was something in the nature of the commander-in-chief in the field who is omnipotent by virtue of his office, omniscient by etiquette, but is prevented by his humanity from being omnipresent, and so uses a staff whose bond is that of externally imposed, disciplined endeavour to make good that unfortunate deficiency. But discipline Hitler had to create and impose himself. He did so on the one hand by making himself sole arbiter of orthodoxy, and on the other by playing off one faction in staff and party against the other. Loyalty was therefore very definitely gang loyalty, the loyalty of interest, and insistence on it enabled him not only to get rid of the insubordinate but of all to whom principle was more than profit. The formal programme of old days was maintained, but it had no significance; the programme of action was what Hitler happened to think at the minute, and the motives of his thought were rarely political, and always personal. Later, as the party yielded to the movement, alongside what might be termed the professional members there arose the serried phalanxes of the enthusiasts who accepted Hitler with all the simple faith of those who take patent medicines. It was here that in the end he found his strength; as he became a symbol to the new recruits he had increasingly a force that was really his own to play off against rivals and intriguers, who were soon forced to realize that their personal ambition would be broken on the movement's sense of personal loyalty. Thus, full as it was of plot and counter-plot, with its personnel constantly changing, the gang never sought to depose the leader, but merely to control and exploit him by the arts appropriate to those who dare not use force. His authority was challenged a score of times in the early days; once the gang had a movement to reckon with it was never seriously challenged. Behind the confused record of quarrelling and rebellion, of promotion and demotion, there lies the steady

concentration to himself of a power so well-founded in unreasoning faith that any attempt at insurrection was defeated with ridiculous ease. Even before that, before Germany was strewn with ex-members of the gang, sheer instinct for intrigue had made him the most successful, if the most obscure, exponent of the personal rule in Europe.

For programme, that programme which Goering, at a loss to find any other source for it, said was written only on the faces of Storm Troopers, there was simply Hitler, and a little later there was Hitlerism. But no one ever knew what Hitlerism was except that it included anti-Semitism, and even that was not absolutely certain; so what the leader said last was the programme. Now that the mass movement has put him in the seats of the mighty, that is called the triumph of personality. One could call it something very different, but it is enough to remind the reader that the current meaning of personality is simply super-salesmanship. Hitler is essentially the supreme salesman of politics. He sold Hitlerism, and the necessity of explaining Hitlerism to anyone who disliked buying the proverbial pig in the proverbial poke was simply got over by the hypnotic influence the super-salesman ought to possess. But to those who are not customers the difficulty of understanding Hitlerism is simply the difficulty of understanding Hitler.

The essence of the difficulty is to pick out any qualities which distinguish him from the ruck when he is not engaged in salesmanship. He is simply the familiar type of the ambitious, lower middle-class good fellow somewhat exaggerated. One can find his type in reasonable numbers in any suburb, in any suburban association, the type which is set a little apart because of its obvious desire to have power, be it only in a local tennis club. There is the same avidity for distinction even in details of dress, the same alternations of hauteur and humility, the same ill-graciousness in the assumption of either, the same jealousy of rivals, the same cunning in manipulation, the same lack of and pretension to culture, the same intolerance of and contempt for others, the same ignorance, the same dogmatism, the same conceit, together with those qualities which make up the average

decent citizen.* The only difference is that Hitler took politics and not a local association as his field, and that he attracted to himself people who forced his ambition to ever higher flights. Within that field he was devoid of scruples; he trusted no one, and least of all a friend—like the true bourgeois, outside his home he has only potential enemies who may be turned to temporary use; he lived in it in a perpetual state of superlativeness, exaggerating everything in proportion as he exaggerated himself. Fundamentally he is incapable of self-criticism, though capable of self-torment; he is a creature of the emotions, who can rise to heights of emotional auto-toxication until he attains that terrible state of utter insincerity which a man reaches when he believes in his own acting; he can be cynical enough, but his essential vanity is proof against any cynicism, even his own.

It was that vanity that made him so successful a salesman for he simply could not believe that he could fail to book an order, and he is typically the super-salesman in that an order is less desirable in itself than in the confirmation it gives of his own estimate of himself, that perpetual confirmation which vanity always, and pride never, needs. His reaction to the prospective buyer was instinctive. The customer was always right, and no moral or intellectual scruples prevented a wholehearted admission of his rightness. Of those who bought Hitlerism, some were convinced it was the purest reaction, others that it was the truest socialism, some that it would put down what was left of the mighty from their seats, others that it would crush still more the humble and weak. That is what made him so successful a speaker; he told his audience precisely what he instinctively felt he could "put over" to that particular audience. Of his

* Lest this be thought no more than prejudice let me give it scientific backing. Discussing the *ostische*, i.e. the opposite of the *nordische*, race which he says is particularly concentrated in the Austro-Bavarian region, and of which Hitler is the perfect physical type, the greatest of the "national" ethnologists, Gunther, writes: "It is laborious but narrow-souled, petty, with no sense of dignity, all that is noble is foreign to it; it thinks only of itself, its family. . . ." A rival, Otto Hauser, has the same views: The easterner is "diligent but unfair, shrinks from no trick, and will stoop to any baseness for gain." Gunther and Hauser agree that he loses his fundamental "spiritual meanness" only by receiving Nordic blood. (E. Gunther, *Rassenkunde*, 15 ed., 1930, p. 170 sq.)

associates there was hardly one who was not infinitely abler than he, and there were many to whom, when it came to real knowledge of the science of creating opinion, he was simply a child, for his alleged researches into the nature of mass psychology are the merest humbug. But as a spellbinder none of them could approach him. Quite incapable of logical thought though he was, the logical form—every salesman knows its value—came instinctively to him. Repetition in logical form gave his words the value of incantation, and by incantation he hypnotized not only his audience but himself, till what began as a political meeting would end in the crudest revivalism as, spattered with foam and sweat, he sold “salvation” and had it bought.

On the stage with all that passion for amateur theatricals which is in the blood of the petty bourgeois, a child of his age and his class, he is a compelling figure; off it he is just ordinary, insignificant in appearance the moment he ceases to act, kindly, a little bewildered, and in private a little unsure of himself—the typical John Citizen of the cartoonist, worthy but stupid, commonplace but pathetic. Unlike Mussolini, whose mind is fertile as well as receptive, and who submitted, though with ill-grace, to intellectual discipline of a sort, his mind is completely sterile. Every single idea in Hitlerism, even the brown shirt, was suggested to him; not a single line of action was his own conception. That is the true explanation of the abruptness of his inconsistencies, apart from the salesman’s instinct of being all things to all men, and particularly of his changes of policy. Action to him is not the result of an intellectual judgment, but of his appreciation of the effect of the choice between ideas offered to him on his position as gang leader. Almost incapable of seeing the implications of action, he almost invariably adopted the action recommended by the weaker faction. His hold on his lieutenants is the very reverse of Mussolinian; it is not based on *his* personal predominance and superiority, but on *their* knowledge that whatever he decides will be endorsed by the party to whom he is not Hitler but Hitlerism, not a man but a symbol; in the Hitlerite state he is not the leader but “the crown.” He is no hero dominating events, however much hirelings may compare him to Cromwell or Frederick;

he is himself an event, a happening. Actually he is in a real sense what a flatterer called him, "the unknown soldier of the Great War," symbolized anonymity, in himself essentially ordinary, recognized by his associates as ordinary, but to those who are not his associates, tremendous because in him ordinariness is raised to the *n*th degree. He is the apotheosis of the mediocre, the *reductio ad absurdum* of democracy, so much, so utterly, a product of his age that he had to wait for his hour until 1933.

But in 1927 there was little but the gang, one of many gangs. He was not yet a symbol; he was an obscure extremist in an obscure extremist association, suspect to the Munich police, but hardly known of outside Bavaria, and such he would have remained but for the intervention of what the Greeks, unwilling to blame the high gods for every folly of mankind, called *tyche*. It is significant that in the Stresemann memoranda of 1926-1929 he is never mentioned by name. The foreign minister did not trouble to distinguish the shriller yelps of National Socialism among the pack that bayed at him. There was no reason why he should. The whole party was so fantastic, so tiny as compared with Communism, so singularly helpless as compared with Hugenberg's formidable individual organization. Its leader's *apologia* no bookstall flaunted; its newspaper had hardly any circulation; its brown shirts were unknown north of the Main line, and in many places south of it, and its refusal to participate in parliament for most people who had heard of it put it out of court as a factor, for in 1927 if one thing was certain it was that a subversive party of the Right had no chance at all of being subversive, and Germany was so full of amateur Messiahs that one more made little or no difference.

Those who considered it at all saw only one thing, that it was out to fight the Red peril, good hearing for many Germans. All its elaborate military paraphernalia of Defence Guards and Storm Troops, the one to protect the leader's person, the other to protect the party meetings, was created ostensibly to meet the Communist threat to liberty, a threat to which Communism obligingly gave substance by attempting to break up meetings and paint obscenities on party headquarters. Every now and

again there would be a pitched battle somewhere and breaking of heads, with which sport the alleged non-political German, with his immense respect for anyone who takes part in politics, felt that the police really should not interfere. In August 1926 the party had just over thirty thousand members, and the Red press gave it welcome advertisement as the nucleus of the Fascist peril. If to certain purists it seemed that Communism was being fought by the method of using Satan to cast out Satan, and that between "national" Bolshevism and the other kind there was little choice of evils to the bourgeois, it seemed to certain gentlemen whose ears were never far from the ground, who had no illusions on the peril of any Bolshevism, but a well-founded dislike of Socialism, that if it *were* a Fascist peril it might contain possibilities. The chief possibility lay in the fact that running a gang is an expensive pastime, and that the resources sacrificed by the faithful were on the point of exhaustion. After much diplomacy the leader and big business were brought into touch. Hitler explained the purity of his motives, that the word "socialist" in the title of the party had nothing to do with the ambitions of an annoying working class, nor with socialization, nor with an attack on the profits system. To Hitler this was only another piece of salesmanship committing himself to nothing but the action of making a sale; what the representatives of the heavy industries thought is not recorded, but their subsidies flowed in. They recognized the movement as a weapon against the worker. The financial position of the party and its elaborate organization was saved; the industrialists hoped for a profitable end to a dubious speculation. But it was not by any means the only anti-Communist party which these same industrialists had helped, and no one paid much attention to the transaction, except the leader who controlled the party funds as he controlled everything else, and one other whose shrewdness has never been questioned, Alfred Hugenberg.

On the left the position was very different. Instead of factions and groups possessed of resources and leaders, but lacking unity and lacking adherents—they might conceivably, had there been an election in 1927, have scraped together half a million votes

—there was on the Left a single powerful organized party, the nucleus round which had gathered nearly three million voters in 1924, a number which careful investigators of the political situation thought would probably have been exceeded if another opportunity to vote had been given. Here, dark and lowering, loomed the Red peril—the one thing the German Communist party never was.

We have seen how the old Social Democratic party had split during the war, how it had achieved uneasy reunion in 1918, leaving outside the rebels and extremists of the Spartacus League, how it split again, and how the Spartacists, though maintaining their identity, were merged politically in the Independent Socialist party which had caused the official party such heavy losses in 1920. But the Independent party split because it refused to accept the conclusions that Moscow drew from its membership of the Third International. The anti-Muscovite wing rejoined the old party while the others, definitely amalgamated with the Spartacists, became at last the Communist party of Germany.

That had two important results. The name "Communist" linked the party up intimately and irrevocably with official revolutionism and with the Bolshevik tyranny in Russia, whose beginnings had so profoundly impressed every German who saw it at close quarters, and also with the worst horrors of the German revolutionary movement, though even at Munich the darkest deeds of a Red dictatorship crazed with fear showed light against the murky sadism of the White revenge. Communism was a subject on which very few ordinary Germans were capable of rational thought, and they credited German Communism with a record of murder, conspiracy, sabotage, and treason which, if the proud acceptance of it by certain Communists had carried any conviction to the responsible, would have caused and justified its extermination. It was simply by the power of association that the Communist party as it existed in Germany was ever promoted to be the Red peril, a promotion done automatically in the minds of ordinary citizens without any prompting from interested parties. It became, therefore, the natural home of *any* revolutionist, Marxist or otherwise, and also the happy

hunting-ground of the same dubious elements as we have seen creeping into the survivals of the Freikorps organizations.

What was the more important consequence, however, was the fact that because it proclaimed itself the party of the *proletarian* revolution, every class-conscious Socialist, every believer in direct action, had nowhere else to go, if he either rejected official Socialism, or let its policy get finally on his nerves. The events of 1920-1923 had left a bitter memory of the crushing of working-class revolt by the mercenaries of a bourgeois regime, and there were many Socialists who could never forgive the official leadership for connivance in the oppression of the militant worker. The Communist party became the asylum for all Socialist protesters, and thereby rent in twain both the Socialist party and working-class solidarity.

Now by 1927 the protesters were increasing in numbers, though not all took the drastic step of joining the Communist party; they were content to vote for it. The official Socialist party, the largest party in Germany, which had itself polled over 20 per cent of the votes at the last election, had ceased entirely to be a revolutionary party. Except in certain well-defined areas it could hardly, except formally, be called a proletarian party. But it was essentially a class-conscious party in the sense that it was completely identified with the classes it represented, the wage-earning and the low-salaried classes. It existed to maintain and extend their interests, and these interests could neither be maintained nor extended by revolution. It was thus now at once an interest party and a political party, conservative in its defence of working-class interests and radical in its general policy and attitude. The major part of its leadership was supplied by the trade unions who were its backbone and dictated very largely its social policy; the minor and the more active part by intellectuals, mostly salaried intellectuals, who maintained its contact with the professions and the middle-class. Most of these were honest and capable, some were brilliant, and some really strong men, but not one appealed to the popular imagination, nor indeed dared to. Thanks to tradition they got the disciplined loyalty of the party man; they never enjoyed the passionate

adherence of true believers, or the devotion of hero-worshippers—a circumstance which in an age to which hero-worship of some sort appears to be as necessary as food and drink, is painfully significant. At no time after 1920 did a Socialist leader ever take first place on the stage; in crisis, the Socialist party was never called to rally to one of themselves; there were times when the anti-Socialist Liberal Stresemann could claim much more Socialist devotion than any of the recognized leaders, although not one of these disciplined devotees would ever have thought of carrying devotion so far as to vote for a Populist. Except from sections of the rank and file, all revolutionary fervour had departed; the parliamentary party could be trusted to oppose reactionary legislation, to advocate in ponderous eloquence its own elaborate but quite unrealizable programme, to defend the constitution and the rights and privileges of the worker, and that was about all. The red flag on the barricades was a vision as abhorrent to the majority of official Socialists as it was to the timidest bourgeois. The party was a party of pacifism; the word "Socialism" had lost its power to make the flesh creep. Before 1914 German Social Democracy had heartily despised the "Liberal" British Labour party; by 1927 the latter could almost have returned the compliment.

There was still revolutionary fervour, and plenty of it in Germany, and, with the adoption of pacifism as a creed, the official party, by setting its face against any sort of revolution, lost one of the bases of its old strength, the enthusiast, the protester, to the great advantage of the Communist party. As the inevitable revolutionary party, the Communists had singularly favourable conditions under which to work. Formed originally of just those fighting elements which had survived oppression—socialist leaders of the old fiery type, class-conscious proletarians, ex-soldiers, ex-Freikorps men, intellectuals, veterans of a score of little wars and miniature revolutions—it was by 1921 completely purged of "social patriots," and had become the one real opposition party in the state. It had almost everything it needed—traditions and martyrs, a flag, and a programme, intimate connection with the revolutionary cause throughout

the world. However cloudy its dialectic, however abstruse its ideology, no one had any doubt of its aim, the seizure of power in Germany by violent means, and the establishment of a party dictatorship as a preliminary to turning Germany into a Communist community. That was what the party stood for; that is what the great majority of its members were prepared to fight for. Unfortunately all that the party leadership did was to go on standing.

The leadership was not its own master. As a result of the affiliation of the party to the Third International, the leadership, instead of being the active tireless direction of a great German party, became the mere agent of what was called the world revolution, but was actually a foreign power. There was no German revolutionary cause; the German must wait on the needs of the world revolution, and the world revolution must wait on the needs of the Russian government. An international revolutionary party is almost a contradiction in terms under any circumstances; an international revolutionary party controlled by one nation is a non-sense. The business of a revolutionary party is to see to its own national revolution, of whose possibilities it and it alone is capable to judge, and it ought to have no other business till its revolution has succeeded. The German leadership was not allowed to get on with its own revolution; it had to await instructions from Moscow.

Until it is realized that the German Communist leadership had no specific German interest, but was merely a Russian agency, the history of the party is quite inexplicable. It has been enormously convenient for everyone to suppress that fact, a suppression of which reactionaries, Liberals, and Socialists have all been guilty, the former because they hoped for Russia as an ally, the two latter because since 1917 they have never been able to look at Russia except through the distorting spectacles they then put on. They still wish to identify the present Russian government with the war of liberation that culminated in that year, and in their obstinate refusal to admit the reality of the transformation which Russia has undergone—a transformation that leaves little more than a sentimental connection between the original rule

of Lenin and the actual rule of Stalin—they have been almost the best allies the Moscow government could have had, on the one hand by obscuring all the issues and rendering the action of a national revolutionary party impossible, and on the other by enabling the Communist leadership to deceive not merely their own rank and file, but themselves. The German Communist party, the official party, that is, as opposed to the voters, was proud to feel itself part of the world revolution; it was truly international; it would not have dreamed of intruding a selfish German interest on the general interest of the greater revolution; it was even content to sacrifice the German revolution altogether for the sake of the greater cause. To it, service to that cause could take no better form than unquestioning obedience.

Drowned in a flood of ideology, it sincerely believed that Russia was still a revolutionary power, and that her government really believed itself to be and acted as the general staff of the world revolution; believed it capable of the sacrifice which they themselves were making. Certain bourgeois writers have expressed surprise that the experienced—today they are not so experienced—revolutionaries in the Kremlin should have ever believed that a Russian agency could possibly achieve any success in a western democracy; according to taste they ascribe the error to woeful lack of elementary political knowledge or to supreme faith in prophecy. The mistake they make is ever to think either that Moscow believed that it could achieve success, or intended to let it achieve success if by some unfortunate chance it ever seemed likely to do so. A naïve American has quite recently discovered that the Soviet Union is a conservative factor of stability in Europe; he might have discovered at least seven years ago that the one thing that the Soviet Union does not want is a proletarian revolution in Western Europe, and, if he had enquired a little more closely, he would have found that its rulers hold that the best guarantee against inconvenient revolutions is never to permit the growth of a national revolutionary party. The surest check on the latent revolutionism of a free people ever, as a result of economic or social events, threatening to become organized into a movement capable of revolutionary

action, is the existence among that people of a Russian agency arrogating to itself the title of a national Communist party.

That is particularly true of the German party in the years 1925-1933. In no party in Germany was there more will to sacrifice, more reserves of courage and endurance, and by no party were such will and such reserves more pitifully wasted. Time and again the Communist party could have interfered, probably with decisive revolutionary effect, had it been permitted to do so, but it was never allowed even to take obvious advantage of the mistakes of its enemies. It was never permitted to increase its membership; as a party of paying members it was always tragically small. That smallness might have been less important if it had been permitted on the Leninist theory to become an *élite*. But the Moscow master saw to it that, thanks to heresy hunts and doctrinal disputes, its leadership constantly changed till every man of independent view was weeded out. The leadership was kept under strict control, the best way to avoid its becoming an *élite*. It could do nothing, not even conduct a minor party argument on doctrine, without a packet of instructions from Moscow, and after these were digested there was always some one realist enough to disagree and leave the party. It is pitiable evidence of the enormous reserves of leadership in the party, of the enormous reserves of intellectual strength, and, what is more, of intellectual courage that, with leaders leaving it almost every month, the party right up to the end possessed a leadership which, with freedom of action, would have compared very favourably with that of any other party. But Moscow took good care to see that the Communist leaders, as the primitive unman himself before a mystic deity, became intellectual and political eunuchs to serve the better the aims and policies of an ambitious foreign power.

The Communist leadership achieved two things, and two only; it split the working-class movement in Germany, and prevented any attempt to realize the Socialist state, and it held impotent the revolutionary spirit of the country. The first was in keeping with Moscow's traditional policy of weakening every Socialist party that is not prepared to submit to the control of

its rulers, and was intelligible to all those who despised the Social Democrats as declassed traitors; the second was less intelligible because it was concealed with cloudy rhetoric and represented as clever tactics. The Communist party was there to await a divinely ordained event, not to prepare it; it could only prepare for it. The preparations took most elaborate forms, including the formation of a Red Guard, propaganda, illegal drilling, the issue of handbooks for civil war, espionage, secret codes and the like, much of which was utterly useless, but served to keep the uncritical busy. After seven years the fighting organization was so completely unorganized that it could neither be armed nor mobilized; just in case wealth might make Jeshurun kick, Moscow kept the party short of money, and for the equipment of a Red Guard that was to wipe out the resistance of three-quarters of the nation, there were available only home-made bombs and obsolete pistols smuggled over from the Low Countries. Isolated action was forbidden, because it would lame mass action; the tactics toward "Fascism" was to help Fascism to eliminate all intermediate parties and leave the proletariat and the capitalist face to face on a lonely battlefield; they persisted in that absurdity when Fascism was half the nation, and its spokesmen as hot against the capitalist as themselves. After the final dying-out of the revolutionism of 1918-1919 in 1923, when the party was temporarily banned, there was no more revolutionary action. The total of Communist outrages is actually lower than the National Socialist total, and they were usually the result of conventional demonstrations ending in a fight; of definite outrages on individuals, nearly all were committed by the dubious elements, as is also true of National Socialism. Behind its flaming propaganda, its bloodthirsty rhetoric, there was no life; it had not even the advantage of an ambitious individualist like Hitler. As a peril it existed only in the imagination of the bourgeois; the party to which it was most hostile never feared it. Even when it swept up seven million voters it was helpless to influence events in Germany for either good or ill except negatively. Its one positive deed was to stab German democracy in the back and paralyze its resistance to counter-revolution. The monstrous

imaginings of National Socialism deceive only those who want to be deceived; Hitler had no better allies, and no one knew that better than Hitler himself.

The whole course of German republican history will never be understood unless it is grasped that while Hugenberg represented conventional counter-revolution the mission assigned to the two professional revolutionary parties was to split and neutralize the revolutionary force in Germany. Now there was a genuine revolutionism in Germany which in a special sense was a product of the war. It has already been said that in 1914 revolutionism was dead in Germany; it was apparently very much alive in 1919, but it was a resurrection rather than a new creation; there was barely a new idea in it. But side by side with it there was a completely new revolutionism, and that was the revolutionism which the youth of Germany brought back with them from the war. Politically the war was in one sense the apotheosis of nineteenth-century liberalism, which, having accomplished its task of liberating the peoples and exhausted itself in leavening the intractable lumps of Socialism and Conservatism, had died as a force. What came out of the war was the new Liberalism that is always there to take up the torch of the old. Not only in Germany, but particularly in Germany, the war set free and created a new impulse to change, to liberation, to the creation of new forms of social organization. It took very varied forms as a casual inspection of post-war literature* will show, but they may be reduced to two, if it is remembered that the two are not separate impulses but two aspects of the same impulse. The first form made of change an end in itself. It saw in the war the crowning crime of a society that ought to be smashed. The second was equally for change, but it saw in the war the revelation of the essentials beneath the social organization. This form represented the feelings of the best, if not the most intellectual, of the younger war generation. To these war had been the first experience of, the first contact with, life. To them the life of the line had meant death, wounds, and starvation, but it had also meant comradeship, leadership, the sense of corporate life,

* I exclude the freaks and the later providers of pills for earthquakes.

and the realization of the individual in the consciousness of being part of a splendid whole. They came back, those who did come back, to suffer perpetual nostalgia in a world from which these things were missing, and so they stood in peace-time for the preservation of the spirit of the line. They saw the nation as a unity like the company, men under discipline led by men under discipline, a solidarity in which there was neither competition nor internecine struggle, but only mutual loyalty and mutual support. While the former saw the future as change, the latter saw it as conservation, but the object of the change and the conservation were the same thing—the classless state, the true Communist state. The former is the attempt to realize a new social unity by works, the latter the attempt to realize a deeper social unity by faith, but each needed the other as do any two movements which depend the one on the force of discipline, the other on the discipline of force. They complemented each other perfectly, and together they could have constituted the revolutionary impulse, the revolutionary movement of the kind that the age, an age of transition cursed at once with too many faiths and too little faith, needed most, the great forward-driving creative force.

But unfortunately there were other Richmonds in the field. In 1919 revolution and counter-revolution already stood face to face, and the two tendencies drifted apart to these. It was inevitable, for with all its grotesquerie and bloodshed 1919 was in its own way a heroic period; there is all the gulf that separates the man from the marionette, between the Freikorps man and the Red Guard of 1919, and the Storm Trooper and the Red Front Fighter of 1932. We have seen what happened to these, seen them develop into Fascism and Communism, and we know what happened to Fascism and Communism. Fascism, in essence and origin the attempt to preserve the spirit of the line,* started

* Cf. even Mussolini's article on Fascism in the *Enciclopedia Italiana* (*ad init.*). Fascism is not the party of youth as it is often called; if it is anything, it is the party of men who were young in 1918. It may not be impertinent to point out that Hitler at forty-five would be as good as ineligible for a post on the *Daily Mail* which deifies him, and that Mussolini at fifty-one would not be considered for a post by big business, much of which regards him very much as the savage regards a ju-ju—except, of course, on the board of directors, that last stronghold where age is venerated.

as a party of revolutionary change, but under the Mussolinis and the Hitlers came to terms with counter-revolution and transformed itself into the agent of that reaction which is called, not with complete inaccuracy, capitalism. Communism, after being the revolutionary party *par excellence*, degenerated to become the Russian government, and the Communist movement the agent of that government. Between the two movements in Germany there was no vital difference. Each stood for change by retrogression—libraries of pseudo-history and pseudo-philosophy cannot conceal that fact—not change by progress, and for the supreme tyranny of statism, with a leadership self-abnegatory in the one case and selfishly ambitious in the other, but each the agent of external forces. They were the one to the other as the obverse and the reverse of the same coin. Together they stood for precisely what was most antagonistic to the new revolutionism, and yet each was steadily reinforced by youth, the Communists the more as they appeared on the surface to be the less reactionary. The twin enemies of western civilization do their work nobly; they split and make impotent the only force that is perhaps capable of saving it.

We have seen not a few strange things in Republican Germany, and we shall see more, but we shall see few things stranger than this—parties of revolution threatening all sorts of change in language that was intended to and did curdle the blood, a rank and file enthusiastic and prepared to die for change, and a leadership that successfully concealed from its rank and file for seven years that it was making action for change impossible. There are many tragedies in Republican Germany, but there is none greater than this tragedy of a youth that was baulked, tricked, and betrayed by hirelings, of a native revolutionism that was turned to base ends, of the murder of freedom in the name of freedom by what ought to have been, and thought it was, the army of freedom.

But the day of final murder, like the day of Hitler's apotheosis, was still far off, and extremism of any kind could hardly appear very formidable even to the timid. To the honest democratic republican it might even, as has been hinted, appear a source

of strength. The similarity of the rôle played by Communism and National Socialism was not yet apparent, and when such harsh and discordant voices raised joint and violent denunciation of the Republic and Stresemannism, he may be pardoned for thinking that the effect would be to drive decent men to stronger support of both. The Red peril—despite its election strength—was doing nothing to justify its name but talk, and again he may be pardoned for thinking that, by splitting the Left, it was at least negatively aiding the Republic. To the Socialist observer who still genuinely believed in the inevitability of a Socialist society, and who was convinced that the Social Democratic party was the key to the revolutionary situation, what was most plain was that the schism made absolute by Moscow took the game that would have been in the hands of a united Left out of those of Social Democracy without putting it into those of Communism. He saw in the schism a deadly blow to Socialism, because the official party had now no chance of power constitutionally and no will to act unconstitutionally to get it, and he must have felt it as supremely strange that, when the Left parties between them could poll 40 per cent and more of a total vote and could do nothing with it, the German worker acquiesced in a state of things which robbed him of all hope of a Socialist state. But the honest democrat would have felt that all this talk of a Socialist state and revolutionism was, given the present temper of Social Democracy, nonsense, and that Communist pressure, by preventing unity, actually did make devotedly democratic republican that strong Socialist party which, as we saw, was a necessary condition of the Republic's maintenance, but in rather a different sense from that of 1919. The "national" observer equally would deplore the Right schisms for similar reasons, and for similar reasons they would be a source of joy to the honest democrat. There was unfortunately no one to bother about the tragedy of German revolutionism.

Stresemann's judgment of the extremist parties therefore was contemptuous, and on balance sound. If he did not quite appreciate the fact that the Communist opposition to him was essentially not a German opposition, but the opposition of a Russian

government apprehensive of the results of Locarno to Russia, he knew that the Communist wail that the basis of the new western unity could only be hostility to the Bolshevik paradise in the east would convince no one. If he did not quite appreciate that Right anti-Stresemannism was anti-republicanism, and what may be called the financial type of counter-revolution, he knew that the trump card of the Versailles Treaty was almost played out, and that about the Hugenbergs there was no glamour. He never misjudged extremism; what he did misjudge was the ability of the politicians to avoid a situation arising which the extremist, be he ever so contemptible and stupid, simply could not help exploiting, and the strength of character of his own countrymen to resist exploitation under stress.

If the preceding pages have fulfilled their object, the reader—and once again he is asked to accept an apology for what was meant to be an investigation and has resolved itself into a series of suggestions for investigation—will have at least some idea of the general situation and its elements in what he may now agree was a decisive year.

On February 3, 1927, the chancellor, speaking to the parliament and the nation in the name of a ministry four of whose members might at any time up to 1926 have taken the solemn warning in his words as aimed at themselves, said:

It is the unanimous determination of the government to take vigorous action for the defence, respect, and honour of our present constitution, its provisions, its flag, and its organs. Every attempt by force or by unlawful means to alter it will be considered as high treason, and the government will take measures against all those associations whose aim is unconstitutional and forcible alteration.

These were deeply significant words, but their significance was negative. The problem before the democratic leaders was not that of defence against attack in the present, but of making offensive anti-republican return futile in the future. The nine

years of the Republic's history had in one sense been a long constitutional crisis. That crisis was now over, and the chancellor's brave words were unnecessary because the government's formation and character by themselves made them unnecessary. Constitutional consolidation had been accomplished. It could be left to take care of itself, if to it there followed political and social consolidation. The method of political consolidation, the restoration of reality to politics, has already been dealt with. There were other methods, but the method did not matter so much as the fact of application in an effort at integration. The disintegration which was visible in Germany was not merely that disintegration which is the inevitable result of the total failure of a tremendous national effort; it was also that more deadly disintegration which is the inevitable result of the failure to follow up national disaster with new effort. Disintegration and transition are as a rule terms for different aspects of the same thing; they become really different only when leadership abdicates and the end of transition appears to be collapse. Politically, what had divided Germany was difference of view, not as to the fact of transition, but as to its outcome. The Nationalist, if a true reactionary, regarded transition as a circular route to the point from which one had started, and saw reintegration in the return to the pre-war system; the extremist, if a true revolutionary, regarded transition as a linear progress to something totally new, and believed that reintegration and the attainment of his political ideal were synonymous. What the democrat, being neither reactionary nor revolutionary, thought, one cannot tell; what he seemed to believe was that transition was simply a dervish's dance round the Weimar constitution until—the secret of perpetual motion being yet unfound—one just stopped. Yet, unless the democrat could find a way of reintegration as logical as his rivals, democracy was doomed.

The republican found justification for his defensive negation in the character of the Nationalist acceptance. In the debate on the ministerial declaration, Westarp, not merely one of the most important but also one of the most honest of the Nationalist leaders, had said:

We do not sacrifice our conviction that the monarchical state form is more suited to German needs. That sacrifice was neither asked nor made. . . . We recognize the validity of the constitution of August 11, 1919, and we agree with the government that that constitution, whether we like it or not, is to be defended as a *sine qua non* of the maintenance of the state.

These were even more remarkable words than the chancellor's, and their meaning should have been as plain. Germany could only be a Republic, and the war on the Republic was ended, but its protagonists, while admitting defeat, also declared their belief that parliamentary democracy could not achieve the end of government, the prosperity, happiness, and self-realization of the governed. The challenge to the republicans was now not on the republican form, but on democratic efficiency, on its power to reintegrate.

If there was one thing clear it was that the Stresemann formula of justifying democracy by success in foreign policy was not enough. The day for that was past. Making every allowance for his belief—in many respects justified—that the foreign political issue was still paramount, it is impossible not to feel that, perhaps in the period of relaxation that succeeds victory, he made serious miscalculation because of it. He believed that the extremists really cared about foreign policy, whereas they merely used criticism of it as a weapon; it was democracy and liberty against which they were in the field. Because he neglected Communism, he did not appreciate sufficiently that Nationalism had swelled its total polls by attracting not students of foreign policy but the same elements, though from different social strata, as the Communists. Both parties had drawn their strength from an inchoate mass of discontent and social misery, because they were parties in opposition to the regime. It is that mass that is extremism; extremist parties create themselves, or are created to batten on it. He invariably thought of extremism as a political creed, and so, even under furious provocation, never took it seriously simply because to him, as to any person of robust common sense, Fascism and Communism appear so childish. With their anti-libertarianism and their fantastic beliefs, he regarded them as

part of the charlatanism peculiar to the age, bearing the same relation to politics as Steinerism, Eddyism, and the "spookeries" do to philosophy and religion. To him, though he recognized the presence and the power of individualists of ability and ambition like Stalin, or like Mussolini, whom he regarded not as extremists but as brilliant if unscrupulous exploiters of extremism, extremists were not a force but a psycho-pathological abnormality; if they ever became a force it could only be such a force as the collective madness that made extremists of the Gadarene swine.

That was no doubt true, but it missed the point. The inter-relation between social misery, which is not merely economic misery, and extremism is a platitude, but the existence of extremist parties, especially when these parties are agents of darker forces, make it a serious platitude. The danger of the extremist parties, and here one omits Hugenberg, who, strictly speaking, was only an immoderately ambitious and crass reactionary, was not in their creeds, but in the fact that in Germany in 1927 they were the only parties left—now that Socialism and Nationalism alike had relapsed into bourgeois constitutionalism—to which social misery could go, and that they were the natural *media* for the modern counterpart of the *tyrannus* who exploits it. The threat of social misery to-day is not to property, but to liberty.

That was why it was so much more important to make safe the regime of liberty than to win successes in foreign policy. The German people was neither by instinct nor by training a liberty-loving people; it had never been inclined to criticize the conditions on which its rulers gave it salvation from social misery. Social misery had destroyed autocracy; it could destroy liberty. What was really at stake was the one clear gain of the "revolution"—political freedom.

Now, as has already been hinted, whatever the German people thought, the creation or abolition of social misery depends on many things besides the government of the country. It is, therefore, futile to accuse the German politicians, as many Germans did and do, of having in 1927 or earlier failed to foresee the European political crisis, the world economic crisis, and so the

German state crisis. They were not one whit blinder than other politicians, who in their turn were no whit blinder than the overwhelming majority of their professional political and economic mentors, in whose *expertise* they so trustingly confided. What it is legitimate to make the text of accusation is that they failed to see that Germany was not in a material or moral state to meet *any* crisis, and so to have done nothing to create those moral and material bases on which even social misery can resist disintegration.

The task of the Right coalition was to provide these bases; that was the only way to make any sort of success anywhere possible. At the moment, thanks to prosperity and decrease in social misery,* extremism was innocuous, but it should have been obvious that, if crisis came and the nation was no better equipped to fight it than it was at the end of 1926, then it would become the very reverse of innocuous. The constitutional and foreign political victories were ideal preludes to a great effort at social and political reconstruction, and it was the first duty of the Right coalition to commence it. The preliminary political steps—the creation of a true coalition and the announcement of a fighting coalition programme—have already been indicated. But the politicians—and even the one statesman, Stresemann—walked cheerfully into the fellest of all traps spread in the sight of national leaders—a period of national optimism which seems to imply the existence of that basis of *morale* which is so much more necessary than any material bases, and so to render less urgent the provision of strong material bases. They thought that the national *morale* was strong, and would be lasting, and so they indulged in the subtlest and deadliest form of defeatism, acceptance of national optimism as a compliment instead of as a warning and a challenge. Of all their errors and weaknesses, past and to come, none was greater or more decisive than this.

* For reasons best known to its propagandists, National Socialism—and Communist propaganda has abetted it—has always grossly exaggerated the extent of the social misery. When one remembers that it was not until 1931 that it became really a factor, the effort to represent Hitler as having always been Catiline has its psychological interest.

CHAPTER VI

THE FALL OF THE RIGHT COALITION AND THE DEATH OF STRESEMANN

THE inspiring exordia to the ministerial declaration tailed away to anti-climax. It was too much to expect anything else. After all the Right coalition had only been in existence for a day or two and the circumstances of its formation had not allowed of any real agreement on a programme. The declaration could do no more than define the basis of agreement and mention the few points on which no difference of opinion had cropped up. The government declared that it took its stand on "Christian principles"—a hit at "atheistical Marxism"; promised a new education bill—the sop to the Centrum which, true to tradition, had made confessional gain the condition of support of the government; declared that it would keep the Reichswehr "republican"—the indiscriminate or rather very discriminate recruiting of "national" elements had long been a source of disquiet to democrats; agreed to do something to compensate the victims of inflation-deflation, to keep finance in a sound state and to continue the development of the social services. It was a colourless programme leaving a Left opposition little into which to get its teeth; it was certainly not a Right programme, and considering the legislation actually adumbrated, meant indeed little more than that administration would be carried on.

Obviously as had been said the duty of a coalition ministry of the kind just formed was to consolidate the coalition by drafting a genuine coalition programme and appealing over the heads of the party committees to the parties. If it were a true coalition programme, it would be essentially a Right programme which would earn the hostility of the Left parties and automatically secure the support of the government parties. But the ministry never got a chance even to show that it had a desire to do so. The party committees lost no time at all in showing very plainly that they at least had no intention of giving up the functions

which they had usurped. The most serious opposition came not from the Left, which confined itself to playing Cassandra and pin-pricking individual Nationalists, but from the Centrum. A Nationalist speaker with an unexpected sense of reality stated the obvious when he said that the new ministry was a Right ministry, and that by its participation in it the Centrum had ceased to be the allies of Social Democracy. He was at once sharply taken up by a Centrist spokesman who not only gave him the lie, but repudiated the whole conception of a bourgeois *bloc*, and in the division the able leader of the Centrist Left, the ex-chancellor Wirth, actually voted against the government. The coalition clearly had not even attained that lesser unity which comes from determination to last. Its key partner—from the point of view of its parliamentary majority—was claiming that independence which makes coalition meaningless, not the right to leave the coalition if it is untrue to coalition principles, but the right to form part of another and very different coalition. It was quite plain that, if the Centrist committee was bent just as much on retaining the sympathy of the opposition as on maintaining the ministry, no real programme was possible. In the absence of agreement between the parties the ministry was helpless. Any true responsibility was taken from it and the doctrine of ministerial responsibility remained as before the doctrine of the responsibility of individual ministers to their nominators, the party committees. The moment crisis had passed, the Centrum came out in its true colours as a factor in political instability. It lamed government and opposition alike, for, if it sturdily refused to let a Right coalition be consolidated, its refusal to permit a better fate to a Left coalition was equally sturdy.

The debaters squabbled vigorously on principle and detail; the majority rose and fell; the cabinet went on being the executive of the state departments. The public momentarily interested in the novelty of a proper coalition relapsed into its former cynicism. Its interest was aroused mainly on incidents which had no real bearing on anything except the designs of the party committees; the trial of a notorious Polish Jew swindler called Barmat and his connections with leading members of the Socialist and Centrist

parties excited it much more than the legislative work of its parliament.

When the inevitable inquest came, the public showed no interest in its findings. The majority opinion in the lobbies was that the wicked Nationalists had refused to play the game. The reproach was unjust. Whatever individual members of the party may have done the official leadership did play the game. The propaganda of their own extremists was sharply answered. When the Stahlhelm held a parade that was a mere provocation—bands, uniforms, princes and all—not a single member of the ministry attended, and the President who as the most notable “front line” soldier was an honorary and honoured member ostentatiously had an engagement elsewhere. Even when it came to the renewal of the old “Law for the Defence of the Republic” which had been specifically aimed at the Nationalist party and the Nationalist movement, only a minority abstained from voting, and in spite of all attempts on the part of the opposition to prove Nationalist interference with foreign policy Stresemann had little to complain of in the conduct of his new allies.

He occasionally did complain, for he was in a complaining mood. His policy was at an anxious stage, but the anxiety this time did not come from Germany. If his *ci-devant* enemies were playing up to him, his partner of Thoiry was doing the reverse. Although Stresemann was never busier and Germany's prestige in foreign chancelleries was never higher, there was no success achieved likely to strike the popular imagination. Although in the minor excitements caused by the British breach with Russia and the sudden flare-up of trouble on the Adriatic Germany played her part as one of the guarantors of European peace, not a single concession could the Foreign Minister obtain. At Geneva there was immense cordiality, but the thorny question of the ill-treatment of the Germans in Poland, then, as still, under a stupid militarist, was no nearer solution. Briand kept ostentatiously out of the Foreign Minister's way and not an inch of progress was made towards further evacuation of the Rhineland. The atmosphere over the whole area of Franco-German relations grew distinctly heavier and the omens for the reopening of the repara-

tions question steadily less favourable. Under the uncertainty the Foreign Minister's nerves grew ragged. The years of strain had begun to take their toll; he was a sicker man than he knew. He began to develop an unusual excitability that was at once the result and cause of his temporary failure. There was revealed an inclination to the gesture that would appeal to his countrymen with the risk that it would not appeal to other powers. He publicly taunted Poincaré with preferring the Ruhr to the Locarno policy; he defended the decision to build a new battleship; he allowed a Nationalist minister to hint at rectification of the Eastern frontiers; he drafted a ceremonial repudiation of war-guilt for the President to read at a Tannenberg celebration—a gesture which roused Germany to enthusiasm, but which at once whetted an appetite which threatened without that to become excessive, and induced on the part of the adversary fresh determination not to gratify it. The intransigents gleefully pricked the bubble of the gestures. Fine phrases, they cried, but where were the concrete results of the policy of fulfilment?

Many of the taunters were officially Nationalists; in his nervous, irritable state, Stresemann began to feel that once again he was being treacherously assailed. The impression was neither just nor unjust, but it had one fatal result; it made him indifferent to the fate of the ministry which was now requiring him every little while to sacrifice some of his irritated leisure to composing this or that difference, as every now and again an issue flared up. Sometimes the issue was one really between government and opposition like the issue of the building of a new battleship. Although the new construction was permitted by the treaty, the wisdom of the decision was certainly arguable and it roused the Socialists at last to something approaching true opposition. They criticized it on pacifist grounds, on foreign political grounds, and with much more realism on financial grounds, criticism which was to have unpleasant consequences later. There was the issue of the dispute in Berlin, over the flying of the old Imperial flag, between a group of hotels and the Berlin municipality supported by the Prussian government, which in the absence of more exciting news was turned into a political incident by foreign journalists,

and attracted so much unintelligent attention that the foreign minister, doubting the ability of the intelligent to withstand attraction, had to intervene. There was the constant bickering inside the government mainly at the instance of the Centrist committee who never allowed the coalition to forget on whom it was dependent. It took the peculiarly irritating form of a conflict between the Central and the Prussian government.

The weakness of the pseudo-federalism established against the unitary views of its original drafters lay not so much in the concession to particularism as in the fact that one federal state, Prussia, was actually in area 62 per cent, and in population 61 per cent, of the whole Reich (1925 census).^{*} Under the old regime the presidency of the Council in Prussia and the Imperial Chancellorship were always held by the same person, which to a very large extent gave unified control, but the Weimar debaters had abandoned that to make the Prussian government as independent of the Central government as was the Bavarian government. The "independence" of a small state like Baden mattered little, but the co-existence of a Prussian and a Central government made for difficulty, if the two governments happened to have different composition and different policy. Since the Revolution Prussia had been ruled, and on the whole ruled well, by a Socialist-Centrist-Democrat coalition, a coalition which in Prussia was by tradition radical. It had at any rate made Prussia the centre of republicanism, with a strong police force recruited from "safe" elements and a tendency to take action against anti-republicans such as the Central government rarely found courage to take. The presence of the Centrum in both coalitions, one Right and one Left, might have been assumed to be a unifying element. It was the contrary. In Prussia the alliance of the arch-sectarians with the non-sectarian had given results far too favourable from the sectarian point of view for the Centrists to break it. This was the significance of the Centrist repudiation of the charge that they had become a Right party; they could not, so long as it was easier to make a con-

^{*} This is a very cursory allusion to a formidably complicated subject. Hans Goldschmidt's *Das Reich und Preussen im Kampf um die Fuehrung, 1871-1918* (Berlin, 1931) is a useful introduction to a voluminous political and legal literature.

fessional deal with "atheistical" Socialism than with the more definite protestantism of Nationalism and Populism. Faced with a Right coalition in the Reich, the Prussian government claimed to be the guardian of democracy, and its Centrist members took the lead in vigorously resisting all demands for a broadening of its basis by including at least the Populists. Between the two governments there developed a series of disputes mainly on financial matters and in what were cynically described as spheres of incompetence, disputes steadily exploited by the Centrists to emphasize the dependence of the Reich government on their votes.* Just at this moment the Prussian issue had become a matter of interest to great numbers of the citizens to many of whom a solution of the Prusso-German dualism appeared not merely a necessity from the point of view of the technique of government, but as an essential condition of the restoration of reality by preventing a conflict of authority when the future of the state was at stake, whether it was a case of suppressing subversion or saving the peasantry from debt and extinction. The existence of associations to reform the constitution in this respect or to resist reform, and the vigour of the discussion in the press and elsewhere indicated the extent to which the nation was interested; the political situation had the ironic result that the Prussian government composed in the main of convinced anti-dualists found it opportune under Centrist influence to be unitarism's most formidable opponent.†

From being a national issue the reform of pseudo-federalism became a party political one with dire consequences in the future and fatal consequences to the coalition. It was quite impossible to hold the coalition together, with the Centrists not merely

* The pin-pricking that went on steadily is seen not only in the general hostility of the Reichsrat (in which it was not difficult for the Prussian government to get a majority) to Reich government measures but in many personal incidents. For instance, the new minister of the interior, a Nationalist, made, as he was completely entitled to do, a number of personal changes in his ministry. The Prussian government ostentatiously gave one of the deposed, a philo-Socialist, a post in the Prussian service, removing a Populist from his desk to do so.

† The interest culminated in the foundation by Luther of the "League for the Renovation of the Reich," a somewhat academic but potentially fruitful body whose labours were brought to an end by the great crisis.

claiming independence of it but the right to wage war upon it, if only because the other parties to it, being composed of human beings, could not go on perpetually turning the other cheek. The ministry, the mere agent of the quarrelling committees, left them to it and conscious simply of performing a legislative task incumbent upon it, quietly and even contentedly laid the powder train that was to blow it sky high.

In pursuance of the pledge given to the Centrum, the department concerned worked out an education bill which was accepted by the cabinet. Into its details there is no need to go; it will suffice to say that it represented a compromise acceptable to the Centrum in the matter of the confessional schools. Its announcement coincided perhaps a little unfortunately with a controversy over the Concordat which the foreign minister was negotiating with the Vatican and with an episcopal manifesto that went a good deal further than the constitution in its assertion of Roman Catholic rights. But even if the atmosphere was unfavourable there was, the cabinet thought, no need to anticipate more than the usual bargaining and intrigue.

There was confronting the nation a very serious educational problem of "republicanizing" schools and universities, and bringing education generally into harmony with the spirit and requirements of the age; the cabinet chose a merely sectarian issue and to its immense surprise sectarian passion flared up. The People's party, heir of the liberal—which was never so very liberal—Protestant tradition which had stood by Bismarck in the *Kulturkampf*, came out at once against the bill to which their representatives had subscribed and were supported by a considerable proportion of the Nationalists. The bill, indeed, passed a first and a second reading in the Reichstag, going thereafter to that body's Education Committee, but only after heroic efforts had avoided a breakdown of the coalition. Here was an issue on which the Centrum was supremely conscious that it represented a suspect minority of the nation. For the past twelve months it had distinctly failed to carry out its usual policy in imitation of one of the most distinguished founders of the Church catholic and be all things to all men. It had been a serious em-

barrassment to its government colleagues, and those colleagues would not have been human if they had not welcomed the chance of taking their revenge under the cover of being true to sectarian principle. On the bill in isolation the Centrum knew that it had not the slightest chance of success. On any confessional issue that was a straight issue they must be beaten; therefore there must not be a confessional issue. The chancellor, himself a Centrist, could do little though for some months he succeeded in maintaining uneasy unity. He was an ideal chairman, but he lacked at once political sense and driving power, and was quite unable to lift the question to the plane on which it ought to have been lifted, the constitutional plane. Faced with sectarian opposition the Centrum sought to bring pressure to bear on the one real power in the cabinet, the foreign minister. Trading simply on his well-known antipathy to a cabinet crisis which he had done his best to avoid, they issued an astounding ultimatum. If, it was said in effect, the spectacle was afforded at the coming elections of the People's party with the foreign minister at its head fighting the Centrum on the confessional issue, the Centrum would reluctantly be obliged to feel that they could no longer support a foreign minister who was their open opponent. This step, although taken privately by a prominent leader and an old cabinet colleague, made any attempt at compromise hopeless. It was blackmail of the kind that had succeeded more than once in the old days, but it was singularly foolish to try blackmail upon a man who not only was precisely of that type which will instinctively fight the blackmailer, but who had already come to the conclusion that the maintenance of the government was not an ineluctable necessity.

Sectarianism and intrigue combined to make politics suddenly "real." The bill was clearly dead or certain to be defeated, and the Centrum now openly intrigued for the expulsion of Stresemann and his party from the government and the formation of a Right-Centrum coalition, an intrigue in which the Nationalists, unfortunately for themselves, were not universally indisposed to share. The foreign minister had already come to the conclusion that for the success of his policy the continuance of the coalition

was not a fundamental necessity, but a change of government which might have for result his departure from the Foreign Office he could not contemplate with equanimity. He had already taken preliminary steps to open negotiations with the Allies, already had had evidence of a reluctance to co-operate with him, and he dreaded the effect of so dramatic a change of personnel as his departure would be. Once again the paramountcy of foreign affairs made the maintenance of "unreality" a matter of practical politics.

The end to the situation now created was obviously a change of government. That was natural and not necessarily detrimental to the national interests. But it was so clear that it would be a change which reflected no change in public opinion that it met with opposition from a quarter from which many politicians did not expect it.

There is in every country what may be called without offence a political class, that is to say, men who by training, birth, and experience have a peculiar but genuine intellectual, and often personal, interest in problems of government. As might be expected, that class in Germany was not exactly the class that was likely to be filled with pure democratic enthusiasm; it was as a class, if not hostile to, at least suspicious of, parliamentary democracy in general, and in particular of the inexperienced democratic politicians in Germany. With the restoration of normal political conditions that class had become intellectually very active—we shall have several occasions later to trace the influence on events of this or that group—and inevitably very critical of the flounderings of the politicians. It seemed to it that the necessary counterpoise to the instability of the parliamentary system was the stability of the Presidential office—in other words, more power to the President. This was particularly true of the entourage of the President himself, notably of his able adviser, State-Secretary Meissner, a constitutional lawyer of great ability, of Socialist sympathies originally, but a strict "non-party man," though still reckoned a democrat, who had been a tower of strength to Ebert and was very much in the confidence of Hindenburg. The aged marshal, who was no politician, or rather was capable of reducing every political issue to a simple formula of duty, had

had the unique experience of twice becoming a legend and a symbol. He had been the symbol of Germany's war effort; he was now the incarnation of Germany's peace effort with an authority over the minds and hearts of his countrymen which was almost unlimited. To the little group that surrounded him it seemed in the national interest that that authority should within its constitutional limits be exercised to the full. It had already been exercised unchallenged when, on the resignation of the minister of defence who had incurred the wrath of the Left by his encouragement of "militarism and monarchism," the President, acting on the advice of his little circle of counsellors, had claimed the right of appointment in virtue of his position as commander-in-chief and had nominated his old quartermaster-general, Groener. The fact that Groener by his record was personally welcome to the Left caused the significance of the method of his appointment to be ignored, and the way was thereby opened for still further assertion of the presidential prerogatives. The President now intervened to save the ministry. He made his view known that he would regard the break-up of the Right coalition as detrimental to the national interests and instructed the chancellor to postpone a fortuitous cause of difference until at least the primary legislative work before the Reichstag was accomplished, in other words to drop the education bill and organize for the general election which was constitutionally due in May. The government was willing enough; the party committees were not, because unfortunately the parties for once had got out of hand and insisted that the education issue should be settled now. In the committee the bill was defeated. The defeat meant that the coalition was at an end. The most that could be done was for the cabinet to make a concession to the President, refuse to resign and carry on until the dissolution.

But to all intents and purposes it had resigned and technically on account of a government defeat in parliament. There was nothing strange in the fact that, a party to it having revolted, the coalition was at an end. But there was certainly something strange in so complete a divorcement of government from parliament that a coalition cabinet should proceed with a bill on

the assumption that it was not its business, but that of the parties to decide what was to happen to it, and that it is possible for a coalition cabinet to go on governing after dissolution of the coalition without the rebels withdrawing their members. The parties were in no hurry; no one knew what arrangements might yet be made; the ministry was quite content to go existing and functioning in its vacuum. It washed its hands of the whole affair and declined to give a lead.

The duty of the coalition government to the electorate is not always understood in these days when the press at the service of pseudo-political interests can independently place an issue before the people. An election, whether the result of a government act of dissolution or of the expiry of the time limit of the parliament, is always an appeal to the nation on the record of the government. That ultimately is what is meant by the government deciding the issue of the election. Under a system of alternative coalitions the system is the same; under a system of *ad hoc* coalitions it becomes the duty of the government definitely to place the issue of the coalition before the nation. This was not unfamiliar to Germany; Marx himself had done so in 1924. The duty of the ministry was either to carry on minus the rebel party or face the country as a new coalition; in any case it was the duty of the ministry to see that there was a coalition issue placed before the nation. Actually all it did was to acquiesce; if it had wanted to say anything, which it did not, it would have said only something to this effect: the party leaders have quarrelled, a happening with which we had nothing to do; the coalition is dissolved; it is impossible for it to be patched up again; it is not our province to do anything in the matter; do you please now vote on any issue you wish for any party you wish; when your votes are counted an effort will be made by somebody to scrape together another sort of coalition to carry on the government; of its composition we have no notion nor have your party leaders. That is sheer negation, but it is not an unfair representation of the case.

Of the momentous bill which had wrecked the coalition little more was heard; all that remained of it was the personal and

sectarian rancour which its unhappy history had aroused. The country was little moved either by its appearance or its disappearance, and it was not much more moved by the fall of the coalition. Neither the split in the bourgeois *bloc* nor the result of the election produced anything more than a lobby crisis, and it escaped the notice of most people that with the fall of the Right coalition something more had fallen than an *ad hoc* ministry, and that was almost the last chance of putting government in Germany on a true democratic basis.

In 1928 that aspect of the case was not appreciated except in those circles to which the establishment of government on a democratic basis did not appear highly desirable. It was sensed by many individuals who expressed more strongly than before their opinion that politics was a game and all politicians a nuisance. But the reaction of the failure on the individual was slight, because the country was even more prosperous than when the coalition had taken office and the nation, feeling itself steadily advancing, was not disposed to take alarm, much less to be actively critical.

Only a few observers saw in the election—held at last on May 20—disquieting features, the appearance of which in that form they ascribed to the politicians who had stage-managed the formation and the end of the Right coalition. These few were actually shocked at the failure of the politicians to give a lead now that Germany was called upon to speak her mind. On what? From the political leader there was no answer. The party programmes were refurbished for the occasion, but otherwise the slate was wiped clean, and the unfortunate electorate asked more or less unguided to scribble upon it. The result was that the election was the quietest and the worst patronized in the history of the Republic. That there was any change in the relative strengths was due simply to the tendency of a certain type of voter to vote against the government, to a reawakening of radicalism as a result of the Socialist opposition to the naval programme, to the further splitting of the middle class and to increased abstentionism. It was most certainly not a verdict in the true political sense of the word. A fraction under a quarter of the electorate did not trouble to vote at all. Over two million voters voted away from the big

political parties, and of these close on a million and a half voted for parties which had no chance of representation. Both Socialists and Communists showed a large increase, their poll rising to 40 per cent of the whole, while every middle-class party showed a decline except—an ominous sign—the Economic party* which was specifically an interest party. The Centrum fell to the lowest figure it ever polled under the Republic, while the Nationalist party not merely lost a fifth of its supporters, but showed a still further tendency to split. Altogether, if one judged simply on comparisons with previous elections, it was a decided Left victory.

Quiet though the election was it had been marked by some interesting incidents, two of which may be noted. Down in Munich there had been angry debates in the National Socialist headquarters whether or no the party should participate in the elections. So far Hitler had been opposed on principle to participation on the eminently reasonable ground that it was inconsistent with a profession of lack of faith in and opposition to parliamentarism. But towards the end of 1927 the struggle in his staff had brought victory to almost the only man of genuine ability and the only man of genuine political talent that the movement threw up—the ex-chemist Gregor Strasser, a born organizer. Appointed chief organizer of the party in 1927 he began for the first time to make it successfully cut into the strength of the still existing Voelkische Bloc, and finally succeeded in attracting to National Socialism the bulk of the Bloc's members in Parliament. The question of participation, therefore, assumed a rather different aspect, and Strasser successfully pressed the view that, unless the National Socialist party became a truly national party and shared in the fight for power, the whole movement on the extreme Right would never attain unity, but would be divided into parliamentarians and non-parliamentarians. If Hitler wanted to be the unchallenged

* This was the only important middle-class interest party. It stood for the small trader and manufacturer and combined a guild tendency with demands for non-interference in industry by the state. The Landbund, grouping the large landowners and strongly "protectionist," was the chief Right interest party. In 1927 it was almost a Centre party in contrast to smaller "small farmers'" parties which tended to Right and Left "Bolshevism." Only when the great landed interests were directly menaced did the Landbund go "extremist."

leader of the Voelkische movement he must take over the whole heritage, and included in that heritage was a parliamentary party. Strasser was reinforced by the chief hero of the Bavarian counter-revolution, General von Epp, one of the few Right extremists without a superfluity of personal ambition and on the whole a gentleman. The participators, in spite of the furious resistance of Strasser's chief personal enemy, a crippled little litterateur of warped mind, tremendous energy, and unlimited talent for intrigue, Paul Josef Goebbels, carried the Leader with them not because he was convinced of the rightness of their view, but because their opponents at the moment seemed to be more dangerous to his authority. As was the etiquette, the opposition gave way and the National Socialist party for the first time appeared as a candidate—the first step to becoming a mass-party for parliamentary representation. Its first appearance was not impressive. Although it had now received practically all the Voelkische fragments into its bosom it polled only 810,000 votes (2·6 per cent), nearly 100,000 less than the Voelkische had done on their day of disaster in December 1924. In four years Right extremism had not increased its power but had gone on losing it—it had even lost heavily in its stronghold, Bavaria—a circumstance very heartening to men of good will.

The figures may not have been a disillusion to Hitler; they had to him the very satisfactory effect of making the Strasser wing distinctly more subdued, but he cannot but have contrasted his feeble poll with the three million and over of his ostensible enemies, the Communists. The official party of revolution had not done so well as in the first election in 1924 when extremism of any kind was in the ascendancy, but it had done much better than in the second election of that year and the return to it of the discontented was a disquieting sign. It indicated the beginning of a feeling of unease, a revolt from optimism. There was one other incident, a personal one. Stresemann on behalf of his party invaded the Centrist stronghold of Bavaria. It was only a gesture, the last echo of the unfortunate education bill. But it was not from the Centrists that the opposition to invasion came. The National Socialists organized a furious opposition to the man of

the "tribute slavery." They punctuated his speeches with cries of "Traitor," drowned his periods with "Deutschland ueber Alles" and tin whistles for which it was credibly reported the party had a special manufactory, and finally howled him down when he was making a speech of first-class importance, foreshadowing a reform of pseudo-federalism. The incident, so characteristic of the new parliamentary party, provoked a Centrist reaction. Their papers scathingly condemned the bad manners of the Hitlerites, and the net result of the hooliganism was the very satisfactory one of an increase in the Populist vote in Bavaria of nearly twenty thousand, in striking contrast to decline almost everywhere else.

That result and the others Stresemann heard in a sanatorium. His effort of a speech a day had been too much for him. "For me," he wrote, "a speech is fundamentally an inner experience which affects all my physical and psychical organs so that after one I need several hours for my body to recover"—and the doctors had intervened. It was his first real breakdown and he did not take kindly to it; the home found him a difficult patient and could only congratulate itself that in the results, as he read them, there was nothing to upset him further. At the same time the new figures presented a difficult problem. There could be no question of reconstituting the Right coalition. Apart altogether from the legitimate soreness of the Nationalist leadership and the quarrel between Centrists and Populists, there was no majority for it. There was no majority for a Left—a Weimar coalition—unless the Bavarians would join it, and then a majority of only ten. And against the Weimar coalition there was the supreme objection—there was no place in it for Stresemann.

The figures had scarcely been announced ere the party committees got busy. The Democrats who had suffered losses, but whose appetite for power increased as their parliamentary representation fell, were determined to return to the government after months of absence. They proposed, and were actually encouraged by certain sections of Socialist and Centrist opinion, a curious variety of the Weimar coalition with a majority furnished precariously by the Bavarians and possibly the Landbund from the

Right, the subsequent ministry to include in itself as a non-party expert—Stresemann. The scheme had a curious logicity about it, but it was sheer fantasy. It was in fact simply a recourse to the old system of minority cabinets and the rôle it assigned to Stresemann was quite impossible. None the less party jealousies were so strong that the idea appealed to not a few of the leaders consulted by the President, and it was somewhat on those lines that Hindenburg commissioned Mueller, the Socialist leader—as the strongest party the Socialists had at least to be given first chance to form a ministry—to negotiate the formation of a new government. It is here that the great conflict on responsibilities for the fall of the Republic begins and a sphere is entered in which judgment must depend on a personal interpretation of the situation created.

Of the men who occupied the office of chancellor, Hermann Mueller is one of the most attractive. Tall, stooping, with a long melancholy face that only occasionally broke up in a flash of humour, he suggested the painstaking professor rather than the man of political action. He was not a brilliant man nor ever claimed to be; he was, indeed, refreshingly free from the conceit that disfigured and still disfigures some of his party colleagues. But if no statesman he was an able man and an honest man. Still more, he was a man who, as man and as party leader, was conspicuous for his strong sense of duty and his moral courage; he had dared to sign the peace treaty when the courage of others failed them; he had never been a Left-winger, but he was one of the few political leaders who had a clean record of consistency. He was an able chairman and a competent negotiator, but his shyness made him rougher than a leading politician need be, and his oratory was severely factual broken only by an odd purple passage that showed all the marks of painful composition. He was a man who would inspire friendship and respect, but never enthusiasm. But his most valuable asset, an asset that made him capable of achievement denied to abler men, was his sense of loyalty and responsibility. Slow to be convinced he stuck, when convinced, to his convictions and neither threat nor bribe could move him. Despite the difference in their outlook he was Hin-

denburg's favourite among the party chancellors; despite the difference in their temperaments Stresemann came to rely upon him for support in a way that he had never been able to rely on Marx or Luther. He did not dazzle; he was not the man for the waving flags and the stirring sound of the "Charge"; he was a dependable man with a genius for bringing up the rear without fuss, the best type of German labour leader, and now eternally honoured by being the butt of a regime which can never forgive him for dying before it could lynch him.

What his own personal view of the situation in 1928 was we do not know; he rarely asserted himself, and the responsibility for the decision come to falls on the whole Socialist leadership and not least on those who were guided by personal and not very lofty ambitions. Its majority was in favour of taking office on any conditions, a resolution about which there was nothing unusual or anything that was calculated to shock German political feeling, but it was a resolution to which very grave objection could be taken. The critics have violently blamed Mueller for not forming a Left coalition of the old type, as if there were something peculiarly virtuous in forming one, but they are sufficiently answered by a reference to the election figures and to the fact that the day for a minority cabinet had passed. Nor do the critics see that the day for a Weimar coalition had likewise passed. For all their brave words, the restoration of normal political conditions had made the Rightward movement of the Centrists inevitable. With the issue of the Republic temporarily at least out of the way, it reverted to its classic rôle of being a confessional party and because of its confession a Conservative party. A Weimar coalition had, therefore, no more inherent unity than any other; there was no special virtue in it, and when all the circumstances are considered it is difficult not to conclude that, until either Right or Left won its majority, the only alternative to a rump coalition was a Great Coalition. That was determined by the facts of the party political situation. A great statesman would no doubt have altered the facts, but Stresemann was facing a possible foreign political crisis—and Mueller was not a great statesman. The abiding merit of that solution was that Stresemann remained at the

Foreign Office with the good will of his party, but it could hardly be expected that, after the painful rift between Populists and Centrists which had brought down the late government, either party would view with aught but a bilious eye any suggestion for immediate re-collaboration. Any coalition formed would for the moment at least be artificial.

Now of all parties the Social Democrats had the best reason to avoid the artificial. They had been the chief sufferers by the old artificial system of *ad hoc* cabinets, and they had been the chief gainers by "the return to reality" which had finally forced them into the reality of opposition. Feeble and factious as that opposition often was, the mere fact that the parliamentary party had opposed had had a profound effect on the rank and file. Roused to new enthusiasm by their leaders' attack on class legislation and on "militarism," particularly with regard to the naval programme, they felt that these leaders had seen the errors of their ways, had ceased to dally in the outer courts of capitalism, and were returning to the old aim of a sustained assault on privilege and reaction such as would finally place them in possession of undivided power and of the chance to realize the Socialist state. The very last thing that should have been done was anything to damp down that enthusiasm, and in the circumstances the Social Democratic leaders ought to have shaken off alike their inhibitions and their personal ambitions, have resisted the temptation of office, have flung the onus of government on the bourgeois parties, and continued to put up an opposition of which the party would have reaped the electoral benefit. Between the alternatives of certain office and possible power they ought not to have hesitated. Opposition was, had they but seen it, a condition of power, office a cause of impotence; opposition alone could weaken the attractive power of Communism and restore working class solidarity, a restoration which was worth any personal sacrifice to accomplish.

But although it was, perhaps, too much to expect such capacity for sacrifice in the Socialist leadership, there did remain such a thing as a sense of dignity. Among the conditions put by the President were the retention of his personal nominee, Groener,

at the Ministry of Defence, and so the admission of the claim that as commander-in-chief of the armed forces of the state he shared control with parliament but not with the government, and support of the naval programme of the former ministry. How the Socialist leaders would justify a personal *volte-face* on so vital an issue was their business, but nothing should have blinded them to the fact that such a *volte-face* would fatally quench the new-found enthusiasm in the party, and, combined with the decision to postpone once again the assault on power, would profoundly dispirit it. The acceptance of such conditions by shrewd party politicians is inexplicable even on the grounds of personal ambitions, for such ambitions ultimately could only be satisfied through the party on condition that the party was not rendered impotent. But they made the decision and from that moment the party ceased to play a decisive part. Its rôle was taken by the trade unions, and in the last years of crisis of the Republic's history Socialism, having thrown away its last chance of victory, became nothing more than the resistance of a privileged class to the attack on its privileges.

It is no palliation to say that foreign political considerations outweighed any others or to ascribe the responsibility of the decision to Stresemann. The continuance of the Social Democrats in opposition would not have affected the foreign political situation, and Stresemann can hardly be saddled with the responsibility for a decision taken by a party to which he did not belong. That he influenced the decision is undoubted. In his sanatorium at Bullerhoehe he had been driving his doctors nearly frantic by insisting on taking an active part in politics. Two considerations were uppermost in his mind. His experience in the election and his analysis of the election figures had opened his eyes to the possibilities of the situation caused by the disintegration of the middle class and particularly to the extent of the alienation of the younger generation from the Republic. The tendency for it to turn to extremism was not yet obvious, but to anyone of his penetration it was sufficiently obvious to be menacing. To arrest that disintegration would require a conscious effort of concentration, the type of effort which he himself was most competent

to make; but the times were not ripe for it. The foreign issue must be completely cleared away if the effort was to have a chance of success. If it was always to be interrupted by subversive patriotism it would never succeed, and the necessary preliminary to it was the removal of the deadliest propaganda weapon from the hands of the extremists. He realized that the fall of the Right coalition had produced a Foreign Office crisis. The *tertius gaudens* of the split would obviously be Hugenberg and willy-nilly Nationalism would be forced once again into opposition to him. It was, therefore, imperative that the nation should be confronted with an immediate success before the old opposition consolidated and recovered some of the fierceness that had formerly characterized it.

He saw the necessity of a quick solution of the problem of the next cabinet and such a solution as would let him stay on at the Foreign Office. Over the telephone he had a long conversation with Mueller, who had agreed with his party colleagues that the Socialists should take office on the conditions laid down, and worked out with him a typical compromise. There would be a Great Coalition *in posse*, but the new ministry would not represent a Great Coalition *in esse*. The parliamentary support of the government would be the Centrists, Democrats, and Socialists; the Populists and the Bavarians would have a representative in the government, but would not be committed to integral support of individual measures. The government, in fact, would not resign unless on a direct vote of no-confidence on general policy.

His thought is precise, not, indeed, always logical, but easily followed. He regarded the present state of things as one of emergency, and for an emergency the old makeshifts must be dragged into service. The People's party had definitely refused to enter a Great Coalition—the education bill quarrel had been unexpectedly “real”—and he himself must decline as a party leader to enter a Weimar coalition as a non-party “expert.” What had to be secured was a ministry in which he could serve without making the party system utterly ridiculous, a ministry with a reasonably sure position in which he could use the parliamentary majority that existed for his foreign policy. A great effort would be demanded

of him personally until the foreign issue could be definitely solved. Only then could Germany turn wholeheartedly to the struggle for internal reform; till then any device would be justified. In his memoranda of the period one can almost hear him arguing against his own fears of the result of a race against time. He admitted that the fact that agreement on a true coalition programme was impossible under existing conditions was bringing the system into contempt. Cabinet responsibility, he saw now, must be non-existent until the coalition became as real as the parties that composed it. To reform the system would require a great campaign of education, but for that there was at the moment no time. The new ministry was a solution of doubtful political efficacy, but because it might gain time it would have to be tried.

In his view the new cabinet would be a "cabinet of personalities"—the hoariest of all devices to conceal democrat ineptitude—the personalities in which, being freed from the obligation to withdraw from the cabinet because of any action against cabinet measures of the parties to which ostensibly they belonged, would develop a sort of peculiar sense of cabinet responsibility which would serve for the moment. The reasoning was false as he himself saw. The cabinet must be responsible to someone; if it was responsible only to the President it ceased to be a constitutional cabinet—the foreshadowing of coming events is curious. If it was responsible to parliament, it could not free itself thus from party ties. A cabinet of personalities under the existing constitution was fundamentally helpless; a cabinet of good party men masquerading as personalities was not only helpless but ridiculous. The faulty reasoning was partly due to his sense of his own position in the state. He, at least, was emphatically a personality. If he had been returned as the sole member of a freak party he would still have been a personality, a great foreign minister, who could still have extorted support even if party political basis was lacking. But none of the others had the slightest chance of being mistaken for personalities; to do them justice only a very few of them ever made that mistake themselves. A cabinet of Stresemanns might have gone on existing by sheer force of prestige, but even such a cabinet would have been driven either to resign

or to relapse into that Mussolinism which was so abhorrent to Stresemann as a Liberal. The truth was that he was advocating only a hasty remedy on an incomplete diagnosis. But the significance of his action is that he had begun to diagnose. For the first time he had struck out boldly against the party committees; for the first time seen plainly the dangers of the situation. Illness sharpened imagination to realization that quick action was necessary. His impatience to get any sort of ministry was the impatience of a man who seeks to finish a task in order to commence a greater one. He was at last realizing that he personally must make the effort at political consolidation, and even then dimly he saw how he must do it. But the immediate task must be done first.

The fight of the party committees was enthusiastic and long. Not till June 28 was the cabinet completed. Even then it did not meet the modest requirements laid down by him. Two Democrats, two Bavarians, two Populists, and four Socialists made up the ministry which was definitely confined to administrative work and non-interference with the foreign minister. At the last moment the Centrum turned sulky, refused its support to the cabinet, and consented only after much wrangling to permit the *pro forma* inclusion in it of one of its members. It was really a two-party Left minority coalition, for the other three parties expressly stated that participation did not involve support.

If it served Stresemann's immediate purpose of giving him a big majority, that was all that could be expected of it; the cynics said that its members were happy in being relieved of every other responsibility than that of making it last. Two things combined to confound the cynics: the personality of the chancellor and the circumstances that forced it into becoming a far stronger government than anyone could have believed possible. If it was Stresemann's main concern at Bullerhoehe that he should be supported and left to work out his policy without chancellorial interference, he could not have found a better chancellor to work with than Mueller. Still more, he found in him a colleague who, without pretending to understand all the subtleties of foreign policy, knew precisely what ought to be done to help the foreign minister. Now that foreign affairs had once again become "para-

mount" the impression must at all costs be prevented from getting abroad that the new cabinet was nothing but a stopgap administration unrepresentative of the nation. Its majority must be kept together. That was not easy to do with the Populists hypersensitive, the Centrum sulky, the Democrats touchy, and the Socialists half cock-a-hoop at their success, half bitterly disappointed at the renunciation of the advance to Socialism. But it was done for nine hectic, difficult months, and for that truly remarkable feat much more credit goes to the chancellor than he has ever been given. He carefully followed in his own ungainly but effective way Stresemann's advice to refrain from putting too great a strain on party susceptibilities; the cabinet asked merely for a vote of approval of its declaration of policy, not for a formal vote of confidence. Charmed with this unexpected modesty and thanking the tact that had prevented ugly references to principle, the Reichstag approved handsomely, the Populists and the Centrists both returning a solemn "Aye," and without fuss proceeded to take its usual vacation.

Although Mueller was pleased enough with the result, he knew the respite was only temporary. Storms were blowing up all around which he prepared to meet with his queerly attractive unperturbability that so many people thought was stupidity. But there was one major anxiety that, reasonably restful man as he was, gave him sleepless nights, and that was the state of Stresemann's health. With his shrewd and kindly eyes he saw more than others did; with his instinctive human understanding he realized better than others precisely what his colleague had gone through physically. Since 1923 Stresemann had never been out of harness. From that dramatic day when he had first taken office it had been one fierce call after another on his physical and moral resources as the battle for Germany's future swayed to and fro. It was a strain that would have utterly broken many stronger men; lesser responsibilities had already crushed men much stronger than he. It is only when one begins to count up the breakdowns of German statesmen as compared, say, with those of British statesmen that one realizes the burden that had had to be borne. Marx, Braun, Mueller—these were men of tough

fibre and great staying-power, yet time and again they broke down physically under the strain of responsibility, a strain which killed more than one German statesman in the end and not least the chancellor himself. The wonder is not that Stresemann broke down; the wonder is that he was still alive in 1928.

He was much more ill than he believed; for years he had literally been living on himself, and that is a process that cannot go on for ever. Unluckily, though no Samson, he had always been a particularly healthy man, and he had all a healthy man's horror of even a semblance of hypochondriac carefulness; an organic weakness he treated lightly, and he refused to believe that it is literally possible to wear oneself out. The breakdown before the election was a warning that he was seriously overtaxing his strength, and the warning had been emphatically formulated by the doctors at Bullerhoehe. They told him that he was perilously near disaster, and that if he wanted to live another twenty years he should go off on an ocean cruise or to Egypt and warm sun, anywhere indeed where he could rest and forget. If he had done so the history of Germany would have been very different. But just because he was himself it was impossible; a little later a contemporary observer speaks of his "dedicated look"—a revealing phrase. Whatever happened he would have to go on. But he was an incurable optimist; he had little patience with medical gloom, and he firmly believed that strength is given in proportion to need. The need was clamant. Even if the doctors were right, which he quite sincerely doubted, he could not be spared. Therefore he could not spare himself and therefore he did not need to spare himself. It was poor logic but fine patriotism. Great issues must now be forced up to discussion, and the outcome would largely depend on the state of Franco-German relations. How could he, the only person who could handle them, go away and leave them to be bungled by another? The doctors shook foreboding heads, but there was nothing to be said.

The problems connected with the raising of discussion were not easy. What Stresemann wanted more than anything else was to secure evacuation; that was the success which would appeal

to the nation more than any other, more than a mere financial gain. But evacuation to the legalist was not just a consequence of the Locarno pacification, but—so little had the Dawes settlement really removed indemnities from the sphere of politics—part of the indemnities complex. It was impossible to raise the evacuation issue alone or to appeal merely to Locarno; he had to raise the whole reparations issue. On the wisdom of such raising expert opinion was sharply divided. On the one hand many in Germany held that on a definite settlement—only people of extreme views held that “definitely” meant cancellation—the whole financial security of Germany depended. Her financial policy as followed by the Treasury and acquiesced in by successive ministries was merely one of using any device—principally the policy of borrowing—to pay the national way, using Paul to pay Paul. It was a process that could not go on even if prosperity continued, and would certainly end in ruin for Peter when to the boom succeeded the slump. If the times were not ripe for cancellation they were, from the German point of view, abundantly ripe for definiteness, for the lack of which German finance was so little “sound” that the first new economic crisis would wreck it. On the other hand those who took an optimistic view of the economic position and declined to consider things from the narrow German standpoint thought that new discussions were premature. Germany had so far paid up promptly and fully with apparently no detriment to her national economy, and the unsoundness of her finance was held not unfairly to be due to methods which had become traditional and not just to a loan policy which meant at least the profitable circulation of otherwise unproductive money. Particularly in Allied countries, by the school which still clung to the theory of indemnities, it was held that for all reasons, sleeping dogs would be none the worse for going on sleeping. Both views were incomplete and rested on bases which were composed quite as much of wish as of thought; the truth was that political reality will always triumph over economic theory. Whatever the economic consequences of raising the issue, it had to be raised for political reasons. That was the necessity that faced Stresemann. Whatever he thought of the dangers of the present economic confidence

and the gambling spirit it induced, his hand was forced politically. The alternative to raising the issue was political crisis.

The times were not favourable; that he knew. These were the days of far-reaching international action with the realists digging themselves in under smoke-screens of sentimentalism, the days of pacts and yet more pacts and of universal peace pacts, of security treaties, and disarmament conferences in which Germany was indeed co-operating, but was unable to draw any national advantages even from the divergences between her ex-enemies; it was indeed becoming almost indecent internationally to think of drawing national advantage. Feelers and hints brought no results; they were almost regarded as untimely interruption to the ceremonial incense-burning to the cause of peace. But the problems that drove Stresemann on were not to be solved by incense-burning, and the ill-success of a cautious diplomacy added to his sense of failure and impotence the feeling that he was being humbugged. Behind the incense-cloud was pettifogging legalism, bland obstructionism, and definite lack of good will: a source of profound irritation not because it was irritating Germany, but because it was hindering any real advance in that European reconstruction which would save Germany in saving Europe and would only have a chance of success when all the signs of "servitude" had been swept away. The nation was already asking awkward questions which the French, smugly flirting with American idealism, were doing nothing to help him to answer. Yet he felt himself to be the best friend that France had in Europe. Would he have to convince her of the value of that friendship by turning enemy?

Still in the doctors' hands he seized on the pressing invitation to go to the French capital to sign what is known as the Pact of Paris, but ought alike by its character and its origin to be known as the Shotwell Pact. It was not for the sake of an historic signature that he wanted to go; he did not attach much value to general peace pacts, especially when they emerged from American universities. For him Germany's signature was simply a matter of course. She was a pacifist power and signature could not make her any more pacifist. But it was a chance to go to Paris to give

ocular proof of the continued harmony in Franco-German relations and to make a personal appeal to Briand.

The doctors were deprecating and foreboding; he was firm. A few days before his departure he had a slight stroke; the doctors were pessimistic; he was firmer than ever though he could hardly walk. A specialist accompanied him and watched every move he made. In Paris he was warmly greeted by the crowds—to their eternal shame German hirelings of extremism raised a feeble hiss as he bowed his thanks—and he seemed to drink in new strength from their cordiality. At the ceremony itself (August 27, 1928) he was a marked figure, perhaps the most prominent figure at it; he was happily unconscious of the pitying glances of those who had known him as he was and were shocked to see him now.

The visit to Paris nearly finished him. The interviews on which he had counted so much were not consoling. He had neither the time nor the strength to go into detail on everything, to argue the urgency of the summoning of a final conference on reparations. But he felt that before the League meeting in September he must get clarity on the evacuation question; on that issue he must have something to satisfy the nation or face defeat. His specialist forbade him to spend more than twenty minutes with Briand; Stresemann spent forty. He was excited and irritable, a tired man and a sick man. The courteous phrases of Briand: "a complete solution certainly desirable": "put your views before all the Powers": "suspensions abroad at direct Franco-German bargaining" jarred his taut nerves with intolerable pain. "We have lost two precious years" was his half-angry, half-pleading interruption of a string of platitudes. But, plead as he might, he could get no satisfaction; at the end of a painful interview the cause of evacuation had not been advanced one whit. Almost broken in his disillusion and now very ill, he dragged himself from Briand to Poincaré, the first meeting of two redoubtable men. Here there were not even soothing phrases, only the involved precision of a legalist; perhaps that was a welcome relief. But the effect was the same; he left Paris finally convinced that in his battle for peace and consolidation he would get no help from the French.

Once again he was hurried back to a sanatorium at Baden-

Baden. This time the doctors would hear no argument; they forbade even the thought of going to Geneva for the September Assembly. He was too weak to offer any opposition, but they could not prevent him taxing his last reserves of strength to ensure that his substitute, the worthy chancellor, would be properly primed. In Geneva Mueller was completely out of his element. He stuck doggedly to his brief and had none of Stresemann's nimble turn of speech or gay humour to rob it of formal portentousness. He had been instructed to raise the question of evacuation directly. Britain met his approaches sympathetically; the French and Belgians, acutely conscious of a certain isolation as a result of their attitude in the disarmament controversy, raised a series of factious objections and tried to hedge verbal concessions with unacceptable conditions. This was a situation that Mueller thought he understood: dig in and defend yourself even after the last cartridge.

Unhappily the situation called for more than dour courage. On September 7 Mueller ended a long effective speech with the words:

The man of the people thinks simply, and so thinks concretely. He reads that the governments are pledged to maintain peace, and he sees them hold fast to their old positions of frank imperialism and even to advance from them. . . . It is not surprising that he regards international policy as double-faced.

The chancellor was himself a man of the people and what he said was perfectly just and perfectly true, but the method of his saying it gave just the handle that opponents wanted. Briand's position was none too secure; he was still suspect to French nationalism. Here was a chance to throw it a sop by a savage snub to a man with whom he had no personal connection. He answered Mueller with unwonted acerbity in a speech which was a sustained criticism of Germany and an unwarranted attack on her foreign minister. For years, he declared, Germany had not fulfilled her treaty obligations. Her own representatives had admitted that. Evidently there were forces in Germany working for trouble, forces for which after all those governments which

Mueller had blamed could hardly be regarded as responsible. Let Germany first give proof of the peace spirit before attacking others.

Later on it was explained a little ingenuously that it was the sadly true but hardly tactful word "double-faced" which had roused the naturally quick temper of a Frenchman. Instead of retorting that the effect of the truth on the French temper was not his concern, the unhappy chancellor, who was amazed and horrified at the storm he had raised, permitted the explanation to be given that he had not used the word censoriously, but had essayed a classical allusion to Janus! The French triumph was complete. Stresemann snatching eagerly at every scrap of news from Geneva had a relapse when he heard the words of Briand's speech over the telephone which, in defiance of all orders, was still in his bedroom. The attack upon himself showed how wide the breach had become. "How, how could he say that?" was all he could whisper.

The League meeting was in fact a very serious setback not only for the Stresemann policy but for Germany. Not merely had she failed to get any satisfaction, not merely did the getting of satisfaction seem further away than ever, but the nation felt that her case had been badly handled, and that the enemy had had an unnecessary success. But the effect was salutary. The nation began now to realize what Stresemann meant to the national cause. From that day begins his true period of glory, the glory that casts its warm light over a death-bed. Instinctively the national ranks closed; extremism apart, criticism of German statesmen moderated and the cabinet had no storm of vituperation to face.

The moment the League session was over, Mueller hurried to Baden-Baden. He did not feel conscious of having done anything amiss, but smarting under the snub administered and the ungenerous criticism of personal adversaries he felt conscious of failure and of failure through some queer unapprehended error of his own. To his surprise after the medical news which he had received he found Stresemann much better. Not only had that splendid optimism of his, impervious alike to physical pain and

spiritual distress, reasserted itself, but the mere scenting of battle from afar had acted like a tonic. The sentimental rhapsody of Thoiry had been one thing; the long-drawn-out insincerity that succeeded it another, something alien to him, something for which he had no special gift. But if it was to come to a third thing, fighting with the gloves off, then he knew his own strength. In his excitement he greeted Mueller with such cordiality and overwhelmed him with such planning for the immediate future that the chancellor returned to Berlin feeling that somehow he must have been mistaken and had been a success after all.

And in fact Stresemann had some title to be relieved if the gloves were off. There would be no need now to keep the nation in the dark; it would be in the interest of his policy that it should follow closely every round of the fight. There would be no need to go on turning the other cheek; attack would be henceforth his best defence and he was by nature a man of the offensive. In a burst of excitement he set furiously to work. At Baden-Baden, and then at Wiesbaden, visits to the sickroom multiplied alarmingly—experts, ministers, party leaders, ambassadors. On October 30, he opened the battle by a simultaneous *démarche* in the Allied capitals asking formally for the immediate creation of a committee of experts to draw up a final reparations settlement. Four days later he was back in the Foreign Office. The dignified smell of an official room did him good after the elaborate smell-lessness of a sanatorium; he said he was, and he looked, better. His first act was to have an interview* with the Agent-General for Reparations, who ended an argument that had been going on since his appointment with the words: "A solution is only possible if Germany is ready to pay"; it was a useful hint of the lines on which the enemy would fight.

A few days later Stresemann reappeared in the Reichstag to get a welcome that indicated at last not merely sympathy but understanding. It roused him to defiant eloquence and he ended a fighting speech in words that he knew would be taken

* The document giving Stresemann's account of the interview is worth close study (*Vermaechtnis*, iii, p. 376); it makes it difficult for any champion of Mr. Gilbert to go on defending his claim to either political or economic insight.

as a challenge across the frontier, words which interpreted as such brought a roar of cheering from the whole house:

We can speak only of a real solution of the reparations question if that solution does not overstep the bounds of Germany's capacity to pay, that is, if it enables us permanently to fulfil our obligations from our own economic resources without endangering the standard of life of our people.

The Right had tabled a *pro forma* vote of no-confidence which was of course defeated; they need not have troubled for none of them could have put their own case better. This was the new Stresemann thrown back from a vision of progress and now grimly resolved to get what he could for his country if he could get nothing for the new Europe. Greatly encouraged he went off to beard the lions at a League Council meeting at Lugano. Things went with surprising smoothness both then and later, and on December 22 it was announced that agreement had been reached and that a committee of experts would at once be nominated to meet as soon as possible in Paris. It was almost a cheery end to a year of disillusion for it was the end of the uncongenial process of marking time. But it was the only cheery thing. In this crisis in Germany's international relations the parties had excelled themselves in stupidity and incomprehension.

Immediately after the Reichstag had gone into recess the opposition in the Socialist and Democratic parties to the naval programme came to a head. To the rank and file Socialist the naval programme had been *the* issue at the elections, and, when it was seen that a Socialist chancellor intended to ignore the verdict of the polls, sections of the party broke into open and justifiable mutiny. From one local association after another came resolutions of protest and demands for the Socialist ministers to leave the cabinet. The sustained assault ended by thoroughly alarming the leadership, and when it reached the parliamentary party it could no longer be ignored. The party committee tried to allay the storm by deploring necessity, and resolving that "in the interests of the working class it was exceptionally important" that the Socialist ministers should stay at their posts. To many the revolt was a welcome sign not merely of the fact that one party could

rise superior to the lust for office, but of the restoration to its proper rôle of the greatest opposition party. Everything seemed to point to a real crisis, but from a pitiable mess the Socialist leadership was momentarily rescued by the faultless tactlessness of the Communists. Even from their own narrow point of view it was their best policy to allow the rift to become a split of which they would as a party have almost certainly reaped the benefit. Instead of that they insisted on taking the lead in the agitation, demanded a referendum, and drove even the revolvers back to old conceptions of party solidarity. Confronted with the dilemma of helping their inveterate enemies to score a meaningless triumph or refusing to carry righteous indignation to its logical conclusion, they chose the latter course, less heroic but very understandable, and the Communist referendum did nothing but show up the inherent weakness of that party. On a serious political issue where there was no question of merely registering discontent with existing conditions they polled just over one-third of the votes that they had collected five months before and lost the referendum handsomely. They lost it so handsomely that the revolt in the Socialist ranks, temporarily subdued, roared out afresh. The anti-cruiser section went on from strength to strength and carried the party with it in demanding a definite repudiation of the naval programme, and in resolving that party discipline should apply and the party vote be united for a repudiation motion in parliament. Here was now a first-class cabinet crisis for the Democratic ministers had been similarly though not so thoroughly dragged through the mire. In panic haste ministers consulted. At first there seemed no alternative but resignation, for the Socialist ministers, though bound by the party vote, could hardly vote against the official programme of a ministry over which they presided. Eventually, what was from the point of view of parliamentary government a monstrous decision was reached; ministers were allowed freedom of action to vote against themselves if they wished. But that did not solve the crisis. If the Nationalist party merely abstained, the ministry was well beaten. For the Nationalist party it was hardly a matter of principle for the naval programme was not really in jeopardy; it was merely one of deciding whether

it was tactically wise to wreck the government at this juncture. It was a difficult question to answer, for even the patriotic pros and cons were about equal, but on the whole when abstentionism meant nothing but defeating the government, the balance of argument was in favour of turning the ministry out. But Nationalism, too, had been going through its crisis. Its electoral defeat had left much bitterness which Hugenberg through his press exploited to the full. His programme was successful in inducing a number of local associations to demand a change in the leadership. The Stahlhelm was now taking the lead on the "national" side, demanding a "national" front, a formation not in the least to the mind of the moderates who detested a phenomenon like Hitler, rejecting parliamentarism and demanding a Mussolini. Their agitation was backed by the Hugenberg newspapers and violent quarrels punctuated by mutual heresy hunts broke out between the Hugenberg wing which demanded the intensest opposition to Stresemann and to a Left coalition, and the moderates who saw very clearly the patriotic necessity in the present juncture for maintaining at least an attitude of toleration.

The quarrel was temporarily patched up by a reshuffling of party posts. Hugenberg became leader of the party while Westarp remained leader of the parliamentary party. This was emphatically a victory for Hugenberg, but the parliamentary party in its majority being composed of anti-Hugenbergites now asserted its independence and refused to obey his orders to defeat the ministry. The vote on November 12 was taken amid tense excitement. Eight members abstained, two hundred and three voted for the motion, two hundred and fifty-five against it, and the ministry was saved. But the absurdity of the situation was not salvation by the grace of the official opposition, but the fact that the Socialist ministers on what was virtually a vote of no-confidence in themselves, were able complacently to vote against their own party's motion and because it was defeated ignore the whole business. A united cabinet proceeded quietly to carry out the programme against which the only two parties officially supporting the ministry had solidly voted.

Anything more fantastically silly can hardly be imagined, and

no appeal to patriotism such as so often serves to excuse silliness in the history of the Republic avails here. The plain fact was that a system capable of making such an exhibition of itself was hardly worth saving, and having deteriorated to the point of dissolution should not have been saved. If there was one fact clear it was that the Socialists should have left the government; so clear an assertion of democratic principle would have atoned for any complication that might follow, and the truth is there was no reason at all to anticipate complication as events were to show.

The measure of the deterioration is seen by the fact that everyone was satisfied; the criticism in the party press except in certain independent Socialist papers was merely carping attempt to make party capital out of an incident which obviously was not held to be abnormal. The Socialist party had carried its opposition to the test of a division and had been beaten, and felt that it had done all that was needful; it had asserted its rights and was satisfied; the Nationalists having snubbed Hugenberg were satisfied; Hugenberg having humiliated the government was satisfied; the President—the naval programme saved, and a cabinet crisis averted—was satisfied. Three days before, the tenth anniversary of the Republic had been celebrated. Mueller, as chancellor, in a message to the nation had declared that all men—himself presumably included—stood “amazed at the greatness of the achievement”; he had been better employed standing amazed at what, after ten years, republicans still believed was an almost perfect system of parliamentary democracy.

Extraordinary as it may seem, this sorry farce disturbed Stresemann far less than its sequel. Universal satisfaction cleared the air and the new reparations issue took up the whole stage without a competitor. It was even complacently assumed that the whole farce had been staged to give satisfaction and that everyone had acted as a true patriot. The cabinet, to all appearances brought to the extreme of degradation, was to pass from being the feeblest to being for a few months at least the strongest in the history of the Republic. The battle joined by Stresemann’s *démarche* in October, it became urgently necessary to transform the two-party cabinet into a national government. A half-hearted attempt was

even made to create a truly national government by bringing in the Right, but Westarp and his colleagues were not prepared to go so far and the attempt was not pushed. It remained to create a true Great Coalition again. The sorry farce under Mueller's handling made the Great Coalition possible. If his sense of statesmanship was weak, his sense of loyalty was profound. Literally he sacrificed to Stresemann his reputation with posterity.

The decision to create the committee of experts was announced on December 22; the report of the Young committee was signed on June 7. Negotiations for broadening the basis of the coalition were begun before the first date; they ended only a week or two before the second. The party committees once again fell joyfully on an opportunity after their own hearts. The Populists invented a new issue; they made their acceptance conditional on the simultaneous formation of a Great Coalition in Prussia. The Centrum who demanded three ministries insisted that this should be granted before the Prussian question was considered. The Populists held out for the priority of their demand whereupon the Centrists withdrew their lonely representative from the existing ministry, and political observers talked with bated breath of the first time since 1919 when the Centrum had not been in the cabinet. After much discussion the Socialists agreed to offer the Populists representation in the Prussian cabinet; the Centrist party in Prussia promptly vetoed the offer. By March agreement had been reached in principle, but with reservations as to the budget plans of the Socialist finance minister. By April the Centrum had recovered its temper and a Great Coalition government was formed, and then the Socialist party raised the naval issue again and nearly split the new-found basis. That difficulty surmounted, the Populists claimed more freedom than their colleagues, and it was not until May that they resigned themselves finally to be patriotic without making conditions. It was really not until June that the political crisis was over. All that time, the Young committee was engaged in bitter discussions on Germany's future, and yet it was only by a tiny margin of days that Germany got together a truly representative and national government to receive its report. To Stresemann it was the last necessary reve-

lation of the hopelessness of the system, so hopeless that at one point he had been prepared to leave his party altogether; from now on he was finished with it, but there was still the immediate task.

These were difficult, anxious months for the foreign minister, girding weary loins for what he knew would be once again a fight on two fronts. Of his majority in parliament he had no doubt; he had less certainty of the same continuance of support from the nation without which parliamentary majorities of the kind the German parties supplied would be useless. For once he underestimated the strong common sense that his countrymen possess but so seldom reveal.

The Young report produced a deep impression everywhere and the dismay and disagreements on the other side were eloquent proof of the extent of the German victory. Although experts argued bitterly on points of detail, there was a consensus of opinion that Germany had secured not only great gains, but at last a basis on which to erect a solid financial and economic edifice of prosperity; no one who contrasts the criticism of the Dawes report with that of the Young report but can see how correctly the position was estimated and how genuinely it was felt that at long last Germany had won her point. Almost universal national approval endorsed Stresemann's forcing diplomacy.

But the irreconcilables were not long in showing their hand. It is one of the most curious phenomena in the Republic's political history that when the government of the day seemed to be lukewarm and had no success to show, criticism, if sharp, was reasonable, but that whenever it became really active and especially when it achieved success, criticism rose to a maniacal howl as if the extremist opposition would have preferred a German defeat to a Republican success. That had been true in 1923, 1924, and 1925, and it was to be true in 1929. Scarcely had the report been received ere the Hugenberg press started its deadly work. On July 9, before arrangements for the international conference to accept it had been made, Hugenberg and Seldte had agreed to organize an appeal to the nation against the plan by referendum. The Nationalist party, despite the misgivings of individuals, could

not but follow them; here, if anywhere, they were the official opposition. Nor had Hugenberg any less success with Hitler, who once again decided his action with reference to his lieutenants. That the National Socialists should oppose the Young plan went without saying. But the method was in dispute. Strasser, a real anti-Capitalist,* was opposed to joining the "national" front because he knew that its opposition was fundamentally that of big business; Goebbels saw only a unique chance to use a propaganda service such as he dreamed of in the interests of Hitlerism. Hitler decided for Goebbels. But he really had no choice; at this stage in the proceedings he could not go counter to his paymasters. And so the "national" front was formed.

The opposition was not to be despised for it was conducted with no less skill than unscrupulousness. Not only could it use all the old rhetoric about the Versailles Treaty, that heaven-sent card which the "national" movement could use to overtrump every trick that ordinary political wisdom ought to have taken, but it was assisted curiously enough by the natural but unfortunate propaganda that the government and its supporters had been using. Obviously Germany's incapacity to pay much had to be demonstrated. Inevitably it was exaggerated, and even in sober works of reference it was pointed out that the prosperity which the country fondly imagined itself to be enjoying was a delusion. The dangers of Germany's creditor position were explained profusely almost for the first time; the fall in national income, the plight of German industry, the increase in population, the burden of taxation, were all emphasized; it was even pointed out that in 1913 there were 15,547 millionaires in Germany and in 1928 only 2,335. The result of it all may have impressed ex-enemy economists; it certainly caused a sudden and disastrous loss of confidence precisely among those whose confidence it was essential to maintain, the German taxpayers, as these unfortunates who had looked forward to still greater prosperity and relief, learned to their dismay that their position was really desperate. On that propaganda Hugenberg, a far greater master of the science, seized with deadly effect. He discounted

* *vide*, e.g., p. 402.

in advance all the success that Stresemann hoped to win. He told the nation frankly that the foreign minister would win; he also told it that victory meant utter disaster, the culminating consecration of servitude and the placing of the unborn under "tribute slavery." That heady phrase was dinned into German ears in season and out of season; acceptance of the Young plan meant social misery—the text of a famous Hugenberg speech to Marburg students which roused Stresemann to fury; in repudiation alone was there sound patriotism and sound economics.

It was a cruder, but far more effective anti-Stresemann and anti-patriotic propaganda than ever before, but, as he divided his time between negotiation and sanatoria, Stresemann did not fear it or its protagonists. He had taken the measure of these new opponents with deadly accuracy. They were little men, poisonous little men, the representatives or hirelings of what is vulgarly known as capitalism supported by the irreconcilable, the envious, and the malignant. Of all the Right, Hugenberg was the most obnoxious to Stresemann who had had to struggle with his type from early days—the soulless, ambitious egotist who represents modern capitalism at its worst, who has all the vices and none of the virtues of the earlier capitalists and boasts a culture and a social status to which they disdained to aspire. But he did not fear him nor any of the leaders of the "national" front. His anxiety went much deeper.

It was due partly to his earlier experience when wide sections of the nation had done their best to make success impossible, partly to deductions from recent events. It seemed to him that the character of the opposition to him was changing. Beyond its leaders he descried a class, his own class, and still more a generation in revolt. For the first time he seemed to be confronting hostile youth and that turned his soul to water within him. His own perennial youthfulness, his sentimental nostalgia for the care-free life of student days, for its alternation of recklessness with high seriousness, made him peculiarly sensitive where youth was concerned. Even when it ran to extremes as it always does, and mistook the business for the dream, he still believed that the *maxima reverentia* was its due as the only generation with a future.

He knew the quick response that youth, if it is youth, makes to a challenge; he had seen it himself when he faced Nationalist students to plead for the Republic, and he recognized how the appeal to patriotism, to idealism, to oppose "Stresemannism" in the name of the new Germany, could hardly fail to find answer, however fundamentally base the appellants were. Revolutionism he understood; for the young who were not revolutionary he had no sympathy. But he could not understand a unanimity of choice for forms of extremism which seemed to him based on a crude naturalism, on a negation of the spirit of youth which is the spirit of liberty and of all that youth, and particularly academic youth, stood for; an extremism that was un-German, drawing its inspiration from Moscow and from Rome and from even more dubious foreign resorts; an extremism that was hostile to intelligence and the antithesis of culture. If, out of the bewildering choice offered it of German parties, youth was preferring what was least German, there must be something far more fundamentally wrong with the system regnant than even he had dreamed.

Dreamer as he was and so not without the capacity for self-delusion, his own German patriotism was founded on sentiment, but on a sentiment tried by experience, clarified by reflection and refounded on history. The new passion for the exotic and the barbarous he could not understand and nowhere was it less comprehensible to him than in the political sphere. The thought that the generous youth of Germany, heirs of the Reformation, the Tugendbund, and the Frankfurt Parliament, was vociferously demanding not a regime, where freedom was based on the willingness to serve of an aristocracy of thought, but systems which were the apotheosis of the mediocre and the consecration of political and intellectual slavery seemed to his sick brain like a temptation from hell. Yet the evidence was plain, it was even overwhelming, that to such systems youth was inclining, that to their selfish and ambitious prophets youth was more and more listening, and yet all his own experience told him that, though asking slavery, youth was really seeking to aspire to liberty. How could it make so fatal an error? How could the paradox be explained?

And as he lay wrestling with his thoughts and fears, now on

leadership than ever he had known. He turned on them as remorselessly as a tiger in defence of its cubs, but as coolly as a sniper picking off his man. Their smashing was to be methodically and decisively done. Communism he never seriously considered, nor did he ever mistake the nature of its appeal to discontent. It was its counterpart on the Right with its immense resources in wealth and ambition that experience had made him begin to regard as the real danger, and the same experience taught him with what a dilemma it would be faced if its bluff were strongly called. He knew the real forces behind it, knew who were Hitler's masters and Hugenberg's, and he knew that the real motive of the new campaign of repudiation lay in the knowledge of these masters that the nation, were the issue placed fairly before it, would insist in the end that the burdens of "tribute" should be laid on the shoulders ablest to bear them. By making repudiation the issue they would play into his hands, for the nation would not endorse that issue, and long before the propaganda could make definite headway he could counter it by raising the cry of true equality of sacrifice if sacrifice were necessary. Once that issue was clear, the nucleus of the new party was there to his hand.

And he linked all these considerations up with his whole wider policy for Europe. His old romanticism had gone; many bright hopes had been wrecked, and the realization of those left postponed to a remoter future. But the policy remained. Its alternative was the ultimate destruction of the west by civil war or by foreign-inspired revolution. Here was the reason for the imperative need to fight the new extremism that had taken the place of the old. The end of its policy could only be a relapse into that moral and political isolation from which he had rescued Germany, but from which a second salvation would be impossible. The return to isolation was the prelude to war or revolution and could be nothing less. That was why it must be resisted at all costs. He honestly—and that honest mistakenness, fatally shared by nearly every potential leader in Germany, paralysed far into the ranks of the Right all effort at resistance to the advance of gang-rule, with the result that nowhere else is there such wealth of political talent buried in the obscurity of retirement—did not believe that

a sick bed, now in the Foreign Office, he saw at last parties and the leaders whose tradition was freedom h of their ideal a stereotyped thing, how they had failed to contact with the younger generation, the product of physical debility and nervous strain. The effort to gain never been made by German Liberalism; it had been i extremism, for to him everything that was not Liberal extremism in one form or another. Now with particular he realized what he had begun to feel in 1926, that there have been two Stresemanns, two efforts, one to make C free, the other to make her freedom-loving. Once again th of the state had left a vacuum unfilled; once again the d returned more terrible, more destructive than before. In he saw these devils grow and grow in power until Western tion went down to the doom that awaits any civilizatio children will not fight for their heritage.

It is improbable that he appreciated fully either the e or social causes that had contributed to the moral and int disintegration of the post-war period, that he had fully d the psychopathic condition of his age. To him the one in fact was the political fact and the aspect of it that stood was that German Liberalism had ceased to fight. Could de live? Was the age of miracles past? And to the vision (succeeded another vision, a vision that was new and yet . In early manhood he had dreamed of a re-vitalized Liberal had fought its battle, dreamed of a great party of ordered of the people for the people, based on the appeal from youth. But he never had had time or opportunity, nor necessity been clamant. Then it had been rather a matte own spiritual needs; now it was a matter of national death. He saw the future unroll itself challengingly bef He would go to the new conference of the powers and i would win a political success so undeniable that it woul the bases of the extremist agitation, that the fact of freedor be above doubt, and then with that success behind him h devote himself to the creation of the party of the future, h not now merely a Liberal party, but a party of youth and o

which would transform the whole political life of Germany and sweep from its advance the fragments of extremism to join the hidebound and the paralytic in the dustbins of history. With the young behind him he would remake Germany. The mediocre and the base were winning because the good were not fighting; if they would but fight, youth with its clear eyes could be trusted even in the obscurity of battle to see the difference. He never for a moment, with doctors in daily attendance, doubted his own strength to fight; he left that to the God who armeth the patriot.

It was a great dream, and most commentators who have reconstructed it from the few hints given them have dealt tenderly enough with it, because they feel it to be a pathetic dream, the product of a sick, disordered brain. That is at once to justify all his pessimism on German Liberalism and to give the fever in his blood too much credit. Actually all that sickness did was to clothe conceptions in over-romantic trappings. Actually what the critics call a pathetic dream was the most elementary political wisdom based at once on observation controlled by common sense and on shrewd calculation. From the narrowest of viewpoints he *must* find national bases for his policy, his long-term policy. He had tried every one and found them useless; the only practical course left was an effort at creation. If the events of the past six months had shown anything they had shown the utter bankruptcy of the existing parties, his own included. What other alternative, save, indeed, surrender, was there to one who, in ill-health though he was, was still the youngest, most virile, and most intellectually imaginative politician in Germany? And what better method of solving the crisis than to steal the thunder of one set of extremists by coming out boldly as a *national* leader, and of the other by raising once and for all the issue of liberty? He was the only German statesman who saw the importance of that issue not in itself but as a clarion call to youth that was pathetically seeking liberty in the camps of tyranny. In one sudden flash he realized the tragedy of the true revolutionism that is the advance guard of freedom, the political tragedy of Germany's youth.

And with that realization came a deeper hatred of the extremist

leadership than ever he had known. He turned on them as remorselessly as a tiger in defence of its cubs, but as coolly as a sniper picking off his man. Their smashing was to be methodically and decisively done. Communism he never seriously considered, nor did he ever mistake the nature of its appeal to discontent. It was its counterpart on the Right with its immense resources in wealth and ambition that experience had made him begin to regard as the real danger, and the same experience taught him with what a dilemma it would be faced if its bluff were strongly called. He knew the real forces behind it, knew who were Hitler's masters and Hugenberg's, and he knew that the real motive of the new campaign of repudiation lay in the knowledge of these masters that the nation, were the issue placed fairly before it, would insist in the end that the burdens of "tribute" should be laid on the shoulders ablest to bear them. By making repudiation the issue they would play into his hands, for the nation would not endorse that issue, and long before the propaganda could make definite headway he could counter it by raising the cry of true equality of sacrifice if sacrifice were necessary. Once that issue was clear, the nucleus of the new party was there to his hand.

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his countrymen could fail ultimately to see through the gangster. But that penetration might come too late. He did see the risk that, for all that the recognized leaders were doing in the matter with their parties, the battle might go to the gangster by default. But with a national leader, a national party, there would be no default. The critics who talk of fevered imagination do not see that the only criticism that can be directed against him politically is that he took so long to see that the Stresemann policy needed a great Stresemann party, and that where imagination betrayed him was not in the political sphere but the physical. He imagined many things and greatly; he never imagined he was so ill as he was. Yet it was fortified by imagination, the true and the false, that he went to The Hague.

As the difficulties at home cleared away with the formation of the government and the acceptance of the agreement in principle of the report by the German and French governments his health improved. Progress was better for him than any sanatorium, and a final almost unharassed rest at Baden restored, not indeed his old health—that was impossible—but much of his old strength. He worked out his future action in detail. The economic side did not trouble him much; it was the political success that he wanted, a greater success than Locarno. As irreducible minima he wanted definite evacuation and definite progress in disarmament, and if possible an agreement on the Saar. There could be no question of a new Locarno *understanding*, no Thoiry trustfulness. The supplementing of Locarno must be made one of concrete and immediate results.

The dramatic—perhaps over-dramatic—history of the Hague conference is told in many books; there is no need to repeat it here. The preliminaries were difficult; it was only after much argument that the quarrelling creditor powers finally agreed to hold a conference, not merely to receive the Young plan, but, as it was quaintly phrased, for “the liquidation of all questions left over from the war.” There would thus be two conferences—the political and the economic. In Stresemann’s view the latter would be formal, the former must be creative. The delegates met, as they had always done, in an atmosphere of verbal confidence

befitting more the new Jerusalem than distracted Europe, but there was ominous new reserve in many of the speeches that prefaced it. The French in particular seemed to be thinking in terms more of obstruction than progress—facing defeat as against their ex-Allies, they sought compensation from their dealings with their ex-enemy—and all Stresemann's efforts to find a Franco-German basis were rebuffed. Briand was much too subtle a statesman to have attached any real importance to the duel with Hermann Mueller, but the Geneva incident afforded an excellent excuse for reticence and evasion. He was hardly in a position to indulge even in the semblance of a Thoiry idyll. Premier since July 26, owing to Poincaré's breakdown, he was acutely conscious that the formidable Lorrainer, who did not admit words like "idyll" into his vocabulary, was still dictating the policy of the cabinet, and that little opportunity would be allowed him for any of these imaginative gestures of which he was so fond and which had so often served him better than the more difficult feats of constructive statesmanship. He told his countrymen defiantly that the conference would attain only partial results, and that their delegates would face the greatest responsibilities that had faced a French delegation since the war had ended. Stresemann, back in Berlin at the end of July to find that Mueller was now in a nursing home, must have read these words with a grim tightening of the lips. Briand need not have feared an attempt to "Thoirify"; his fellow-idyllist had temporarily become as ferocious a realist as Poincaré himself.

From the day (August 5) that the German delegation installed itself at Scheveningen there was only incessant and harassing toil. Its leader lost no time in challenging the French view on the task of the conference. Its result, he declared, must be the concession of real equality and a genuine co-operation between the nations whom the war had separated:

If in recent years we have to deplore a certain weakness in the will to reach such an *entente* and have to reckon with a certain disillusion among the peoples, yet I hope for a new impulse, for a quickening of the tempo of achievement, as a result of the conference's work.

Modest hopes these compared with the glowing vision of only a year or two ago; the United States of Europe were fading into ever remoter distance. And then with a characteristically bold challenge he concluded:

I do not conceal from myself the difficulties in the way, but if one is truly a leader one must not wait until one has the agreement of 99 per cent of the population behind one. One must go on leading and go on.

The words were addressed to a conference of the expert and the tired; they were also addressed over their heads to the young Stresemann party of the future.

The heavily charged atmosphere soon became lurid with lightning flashes. In the economic conference the disagreements between the creditor powers on the division of the spoils developed into a violent dispute, the dispute in which our own "Iron Chancellor" earned the hearty applause of all men of ill will and an unexpected number of men of good will for a curiously violent exhibition of insularity and John Bullism at an inappropriate moment, an exhibition which threatened to break up the conference altogether. In the political conference almost forgotten by the public in the uproar that emanated from its colleague, there was perpetual agreement in principle and not the slightest advance in practice. Under the strain of waiting until his formal opponents could cease quarrelling among themselves, Stresemann's patience gave way. He was fighting a battle not merely against principalities and powers, but against time, and although he did not know it against death, and he was finding every conceivable obstacle in the way. He felt the obstructionism and scepticism of the French not merely as an undeserved reflection on his country's honour but on his own, and his language hardened from the pleading of an advocate to the defiance of a patriot. Openly now he poured forth angry scorn on Briand's delaying tactics on the evacuation issue. The French had declared that their military experts found the moving of the army of occupation an affair that would require many months and extensive pre-

paration. "Anyone who is a friend of France," he cried contemptuously,

who remembers that war is not without the bounds of possibility, can only pray that her General Staff will be able to secure more rapidity in moving troops in war-time than it apparently can in peace-time.

But sarcasm succeeded no better than pleading. No progress was made on the implementing of Locarno.

Desperate, his nerves raw, his strength failing, he made his final effort. The Young plan was not enough. Agreement between the creditors did little more than create a fresh front against the debtor. He felt opposition harden as the chorus at home of disapproval and cheap defiance of himself, attacks on Germany's alleged enemies, even the quick response of the nation to his own courage in daring to speak boldly to these enemies in the gate, created "a bad impression" at the conference table. He risked all on one throw. He wrote a private letter to Briand in which not all his cruel effort at self-restraint could hide the bitterness he felt. He curtly denied that he was pursuing a policy of prestige, as he had been accused of doing, or that he had any designs against the prestige of France. But he stood for Germany, and he made it perfectly plain that if he could get no political results from the conference he would throw the Young plan back to the committee and go home. Neither the letter nor the writer could be misinterpreted. On August 29 agreement was reached.

The Hague was Germany's victory if it was anybody's; Stresemann's victory—his last. It was not indeed a decisive one, but it was a real one, an unmistakable one. Within three months the British and the Belgians were to be out of the Rhineland; by the end of June 1930 at the latest, and "if it was physically possible"—a beautiful phrase—earlier, not a French soldier was to be left on German soil. The first evacuation was conditional on acceptance of the Young plan already regarded as highly satisfactory to Germany. It was from his point of view not much, for the platitudinous expressions of co-operative good will had now not even the value of symbols, but it would suffice. The evacuation

issue was settled, and it was that issue that disturbed the nation; "tribute slavery" disturbed mainly big business and its hirelings. It was that aspect of the result that was instantly seen in Germany, and made his cabinet colleagues, when they received his report on September 3, express their satisfaction that "the longing of the occupied territories for the striking of the hour of freedom" was finally to be fulfilled. At least he had made Germany free from the last eternally resented visible sign of "servitude."

After victory came reaction. He returned from The Hague to the sanatorium a man broken in body, and for the first time he saw the shadow of approaching death above him. But the shadow found the spirit still indomitable. A haggard wreck of his former self, he flung medical advice angrily to the winds and lashed his failing forces to a desperate effort to take him to Geneva for the League Assembly. After The Hague he felt he must be there, must speak for Germany. In the last speech which he was ever to deliver before that body, a speech punctuated with gasps of pain and interrupted by two heart attacks, when the audience shrank from looking at the tortured face bedewed with the sweat of mortal agony, he went over the old questions and confessed sadly that hope had been disappointed. There could be no sudden heroic achievement; only a long painful process of inch by inch building up of mutual confidence between the nations to possible achievement in the future, the toilsome, almost imperceptible, work of little men in a little age. It was a personal confession on the part of an idealist who had found faith insufficient to move mountains because faith had not been shared, but not of an idealist who had given up hope. There had been victory. There had been gains—great gains. The task was now to conserve them. The Hague marked a period; in the new epoch that was commencing everything would have to be begun anew. The shipwreck for the moment of the greater vision made the lesser vision grow in greatness. The new Europe must first be built in the new Germany. He had thought to serve his country by serving the world; he would now serve the world by serving his country.

And in that country there was raging behind him the foulest campaign to which German Nationalism had yet stooped, fouler

than any of the exploits of the murder gangs, a campaign against a dying man which is a lasting infamy to everyone who took part in it. On September 11 the conspirators of the Right had at last produced the text of the measure which they proposed to submit to the popular initiative. Entitled "Bill against the Young Plan and the War-Guilt" and a measure of barefaced, dishonourable, and silly repudiation, its sting lay in its fourth clause which declared Stresemann and his colleagues who had negotiated the Young plan and urged its acceptance to be guilty of high treason and liable to the penalty for that crime. Lying helpless, yet indomitably planning, discussing, working, drinking in country air on the shores of the Vierwaldstaettensee, Stresemann strove to gather strength from the righteous anger that filled him, and as the news reached him of the revulsion of feeling that had swept over Germany when the text of the bill was made public, he felt that the omens were favourable at last for the great effort he proposed to make. He had set Germany free; he had now to make it impossible for her to make freedom unattainable by her own act. The lists were finally cleared; the "national" opposition was finally consolidated; its spitting, virulent hydra-heads united on a single neck, vulnerable for the first time. Siegfried was face to face with a definite dragon at last.

As the indignation of his countrymen took ever more expressive form, it seemed to him that the dream that he would incarnate the true Germany was no dream but fact. From all quarters—some very unexpected ones—came pledges of support. The best elements of the Nationalist party raised a belated standard of revolt; one of their most respected leaders, a very old opponent, flung off party ties in a burst of wrath; the Socialist party, the Democratic party, closed their ranks for a battle after their own hearts against their oldest and most deadly enemies; his own party, the party he had created, with which he had been at serious odds, rallied to him beyond the expectation of his keenest partisans; at long last it was roused to passionate defence of its greatest, its only great figure, and when it declared without a dissentient voice that the accusation of treason was an infamy for which the fiercest political opposition was no shadow of excuse, its leader felt his terrible

loneliness fall from him. For eight years he had fought his fight with changing allies but with no comrades, and too often his foes had been those of his own household. For eight years he had borne alone Germany's destinies on his shoulders, as the men who fought at Marathon had borne alone the fate of Europe on the points of their long spears. For eight years he had sought the true path to the future, and now almost unsought it was opening out before him. He did not need now, as he had had to do so often, to beg for support and call for followers. In what he felt instinctively was an hour of great decision all that was best in Germany, all that was Germany was of its own accord rallying to him, and—the God of Luther be praised!—against Germany what could banded anarchy, what could the Hugenburgs and the Hitlers do? Up into his sickroom swept the echo of the roar of opening war, softened to a flicker of gray sound like that of long lines of bayonets coming down to the charge; as it seeped into the tired brain, the constricted heart relaxed and to the sound of trumpets calling "Who is for victory?" the blood flowed without pain. But they were not the trumpets that rouse men to the battle; they were the softer trumpets that summon men to rest. In the coolness of the morning of October 3 he was with his peers, and men were saying one to the other: "My father, my father, the chariots of Germany and the horsemen thereof."

CHAPTER VII

THE "INTERVENTION OF THE REICHSWEHR" AND THE BRUENING CABINET

THERE is a tale told in America of the days when the Southern States were at the last stage of their long resistance and the end of the greatest civil war in history was in sight. A presbyterian minister with that fine freedom which the Calvinist claims to conduct intellectual argument with his maker, wrestling with the problem of the divine shaping of history, was heard to pray: "When, O Lord, Thou didst in Thine inscrutable Providence see fit to destroy this Confederacy, it became necessary for Thee to remove thy servant Thomas Jonathan Jackson." Those who saw Lee's "right arm" borne back from Chancellorsville, mortally and accidentally wounded by "inscrutable Providence" by his own men, may well have felt that the stars in their courses were fighting against the Confederacy and all the more, as one of them put it, when they saw in every subsequent fight opportunities missed which he would have used. It is with feelings hardly dissimilar that the student of history stands at Stresemann's death-bed, perhaps with even more poignant feelings. The Confederacy could not have been saved although men fought to the death for it; the German Republic needed for salvation nothing more than men who would fight. It is indeed idle to speculate on what might have happened had Stresemann lived. He might have faltered or recanted his dream; the surge of ugly passion that made National Socialism the strongest party in the nation might have swept him away as it did the rest; low intrigue and base treachery might have ruined him as it did his successors; the actual end with him might not have been very different from what it was without him; he would never have been a member of the Papen-Hitler conspiracy, but he might have been a presidential chancellor; he might also have been in a concentration camp; he may indeed have been fortunate in his death so inscrutable is Providence. But no one who reads the later record can but

feel that the surest way to secure the fall of the Republic was to remove the one man in Germany in whom there was no canker of defeatism, no itch of abdication.

His death came at a decisive moment. German democracy had once again the ball at its feet. It had won a great foreign political victory; it was united and confident, precisely in that mood which makes the task of a leader easy. For the first time, it acknowledged above party a national democratic leader and that leader as a statesman was for the first time free to lead. With The Hague behind him, with a mean enemy in front of him, with an aggressive democracy behind him, he was singularly well placed to use his prestige to rally to himself a great democratic party. His personality under savage attack had begun to appeal to those feelings of chivalrous indignation that are the prerogative of youth; he alone of the elder statesmen had been able to point out the first stages of a way out of moral and intellectual anarchy; he had already sketched out a programme that would have given a democratic party power; he alone had the driving force necessary to make party and programme alike a productive reality. Age and experience, thirty years of constant struggle, had not made him grow old; he was younger than most of Germany's young men, and his blend, a blend almost unique in Germany of romantic enthusiasm and realist statesmanship was precisely calculated to make him just that type of national leader which had so long been lacking if the newer generations were not to falter at the sustained assault on the barricades that still blocked the way to national peace, national prosperity, and national regeneration.

The news of his death came as a stunning blow to his countrymen, although few recognized the deadly nature of the blow. Even the greatest men are never indispensable and any sense of loss is fleeting. But that it was so fleeting in Germany's political life was because to a considerable number of German politicians, Stresemann's death, once the actual shock of the news of it was over, brought less a sense of national disaster than a sense of personal relief. It had never been easy, and in the last months it had been positively difficult, to live up to him; he had risen so much

above them that the mere fact of his presence was a constant reminder of inferiority. They did not feel in the least like Themistocles to whom the laurels of Miltiades were a perpetual cause of insomnia; to them laurels perished with their wearer and death made more room. With the victory at The Hague they felt his work was done; with the entry of international affairs into new phases, before a coming struggle for power in Germany less hampered by foreign political considerations, they felt that with his deepening contempt for the party system as it was, with his reaching forward to new forms and with his idealism which, just because it was so unlike what passed for idealism in contemporary Germany, they qualified as fantastic, he would have been a distinct source of embarrassment. The dream of a great new party left them not merely cold but hostile; they felt it unnecessary and the whole conception unjustified criticism of themselves. For the next few years they considered that what was needed was not a fantastic, but those knowledgeable party leaders in whom Germany was so rich, men unseduced by imagination and replete with the cardinal virtues of tact and compromise.

Nor did the nation, despite the tribute at once of dismay and affection which in its great majority it ungrudgingly paid, really appreciate the full extent of its loss; although he had won such brilliant successes he had not yet won the final victory, nor imposed himself on the nation as the one great national leader. He had had no real personal following, and to the three great parties and the movements on which they were based he had always seemed a potential enemy, although Centrists and Socialists—even his old Nationalist enemies—had indeed the grace to mourn him and to give eloquent expression to the sense of loss to Germany they could not but feel. The newer nationalism openly exulted. To them the sole cause of mourning was that he had escaped the “national” wrath to come, and they were consoled for that by the fact that their most formidable enemy had been happily and timeously removed. But there were others who, viewing recent developments with apprehension, realized what Stresemann’s death meant to them, to Germany, to Europe, to democracy. It was to these, as was said of a lesser man, as if a

great light had gone out. And among these others was the man left to bear the burden, the weight of which he knew only too well was too great for him—Hermann Mueller. Not even two chancellorships, not even adulation, and, what amounted to the same thing, the denunciation of the extremist rabbles, not even his knowledge of his own eminence as the leader of a great party, had cured the chancellor of a noble sense of his own shortcomings as a national leader, and it was with a profound sense of deprivation that he assumed the whole responsibility of a task of which Stresemann had taken so disproportionately large a share.

It was with a heavy heart that he turned to the reconstruction of the cabinet, a reconstruction that quite unnecessarily took a month to complete. It was imperative at this stage to have a strong foreign minister to meet what would probably be delaying tactics on the part of the French—actually it was not until January 1930 that the Young plan was finally accepted. There was, such was Germany's lack of statesmen, no obvious successor to Stresemann, and when the Populists claimed the reversion of the ministry on party grounds there was no particularly valid argument against the claim. A chancellor very sure of himself might have risked party wrath and brought in one or other of Stresemann's professional associates; Sthamer, Schubert, or, at a pinch, even Hoesch, would have made a capable enough minister at a time when it was not so much prestige as skill that was needed. But departure from the rule of party was impossible for Mueller. He would have liked a Socialist, but that would have provoked a coalition crisis and in any case there was no one to fit the bill; the Centrists could not agree on a candidate and so the easiest way all round was to yield to the Populist demand. In front of the Hugenberg agitation a rift in the coalition could not be permitted; the economic minister, Curtius, was transferred to the Foreign Office and his previous post taken by a fellow-Populist. Julius Curtius was a jurist of distinction, a man of culture and ability, an administrator of considerable talent, but neither by temperament nor character a man for dangerous occasions. A good speaker, capable of the long view though not very capable of being critical of what he viewed, he had never been

an important figure in politics though he had been an important party figure; nor was he at all known either at home or abroad. His appointment roused little interest and, because of his close personal and party relations with his predecessor, was regarded simply as a sign of continuity in foreign politics. He was expected merely to hold down his office, and so far from dominating the cabinet as Stresemann had done, to be completely overshadowed by the chancellor.

The rigid theorist may say that a prime minister is not a prime minister at all if he does not, in the eyes of the nation, overshadow any individual among his colleagues, and on that point not a few elastically conscientised prime ministers have been very rigid theorists. But Mueller, though not incapable of pettiness, had too lively a political sense to be petty now. His overshadowing of the new minister meant that in the battle now reaching its height ostensibly on a question of foreign politics, the great official defence of the policy would have to be made not by a national leader, but by a "Marxist" whose nationalism was suspect in quarters which would have rejected with contumely any suspicion of Stresemann.

That was the circumstance which radically altered the whole situation. It created the position that Stresemann had all along striven to avoid, an alignment of forces as between Left and Right without any centre party to hold the balance. It is true that this time the centre parties were with the Left and that the Right was facing dissolution, but the alignment was there and was noticeably there. There was little fear of the coalition breaking up at the moment under the savage bludgeoning of the extremists. It had attained a unity denied to any former cabinet. The Centrists had all gone Leftward again; the Populists were as hot against Hugenberg as if they had all been true-blue Stresemannites from birth. But the worst had happened. The Young plan on which Stresemann had hoped to build the new political and economic foundation, would now be identified with the "non-national" party, and the cause of counter-revolution once again be allowed to mask as patriotism. That was what Stresemann could have prevented; that was what Mueller could not prevent. All the

latter could do was to hold together the forces of patriotic decency for the immediate action; he could not create unity. That was the true significance of Stresemann's death; there was no one to take advantage of the tremendous opportunity of giving the new-found democratic unity such a basis as would have left no excuse for the decent Nationalist to support Hugenberg.

But that was hardly thought of at the moment; the attention of the nation was concentrated on the extremist appeal to the people. The government did its oratorical best without the aid of the one man who could not merely have smashed the argumentation of the Right but drawn political capital from its rout, and on the whole more than held its own with the shrieking brotherhood in debate. But it was none the less an uninspiring business. The difficulty of the government was the resolute refusal of their opponents to come down to argument from bare assertion and scurrility. "The burden of the Young plan," said Hugenberg simply, "cannot be borne; the plan cannot be fulfilled and to accept it is a foul trick unworthy of an honourable nation." Other speakers of the Right put a little more content into the argument, and the rival presses and platforms conducted a brisk financial and statistical duel without causing any change at all in partisan opinion. There was no one left to raise the issue to the higher plane of history.

But there were those who saw in the controversy a golden opportunity for advertisement. To the National Socialists the issue of the appeal meant nothing; they knew it was lost in any case. But it meant a good deal that men should hear of the Hitlerite party, and, without caring how they alienated even those who really disliked the plan, they excelled themselves in abuse and wild prophecy. Stresemann, said one orator, was "a French agent who took his pay from Germany," and he finished a sustained burst of intemperance by declaring that he saw no reason to worry if the President himself were arraigned under the treason clause: "The people's initiative is only a beginning; to-morrow it will be a people's protest and the day after to-morrow a people's revolution." The propaganda service broadcast to the nation the interesting fact that one of the functions of the new Bank which

was to be set up to facilitate international payments under the plan was to organize the export of young men and women to work at slave rates in foreign lands. To the refrain of "Germans never never never shall be slaves" the Hitlerite orators began to gather up the votes of the ignorant, but alienated a dozen sober citizens for every half-wit they converted. Misrepresentation and what ecclesiastical leaders called the "attempt at the basest propagation of hatred" would have fully justified the Government in taking action against the National Socialists for insulting the state and its head. They had indeed a heaven-sent chance to nip malignancy in the bud, but they did not risk trust in their own nation and let the agitation go on. All that happened was that from his super-party Olympus, the President willingly declared that he regarded the bill as "a personal and ungentelemanly attack"; it is credibly reported that the old marshal's authentic phrase was considerably more pungent. The Prussian government took advantage of a technical breach of the law against military exercises to ban the Stahlhelm in the Rhineland, and followed that up with an order forbidding officials to take any part in the voting. The extremists who knew that the Right was strong in official ranks boiled over with fury and took the matter to the Supreme Court. Here was a welcome new issue for Seldte and Hugenberg, already a little scared of their allies. Their final manifesto which bore Hitler's signature as well concentrated on this appalling act of tyranny:

The terror exercised by the government to prevent the signature of the demand for a referendum shows that the law no longer rules in Germany. All the fundamental rights of electoral freedom guaranteed by the constitution have been in practice suspended. Their anxiety to prevent the truth being known drives the government to a reign of terror. The initiative is a sign and a monument of those who realize Germany's plight and honourably and bravely fight the battle against internal and external slavery.

The spectacle of the devil quoting scripture for his own ends always has its amusing side and the government was content to let amusement serve as argument. It made no other endeavour to defend itself, and allowed the phrase "reign of terror" to remain

as a description of a democratic regime to be used as justification of the bloody terror which was an integral part of National Socialist policy.

The lists were opened on October 16. To carry the process a stage further and get the bill submitted to parliament the initiative had to be supported by 10 per cent of the electorate; actually 10.02 per cent voted. This was not victory despite that unfortunate technical .02 per cent; it was sensibly defeat, for the total vote polled by the parties sponsoring the initiative was actually some three millions less than the total vote polled by the same parties at the last election. Nor could it even have been represented as victory, had not the press supporting the government proclaimed so loudly and so confidently that the necessary quota could not possibly be obtained. It was to no purpose that Hugenberg more than hinted that the Socialist minister of the interior whose duty it was to see to the counting and publication of the figures would find it easy to do a little "retouching," or for less extreme Nationalists to explain that electors had abstained from voting because they were confused on the issues as a result of the equally furious Communist attacks on "tribute slavery." It was even declared that Communists had swelled the fatal .02 per cent; if that had been true, which to the best of our knowledge it was not, it explained nothing, but merely emphasized the failure to impress of the shrieking brotherhood.

The highest percentage of votes was in the still docile Nationalist strongholds east of the Elbe where the agrarians feared financial loss as a result of the government economy that the Young plan would necessitate; the Rhineland and Bavaria proper, Hesse, Baden, and Wuerttemberg were solidly against; in Central Germany the figures were rather better. The "national front" was all jubilation—in print; "The first battle is won; the war goes on" was the cry of the precious Committee for the Initiative. Privately there was utter consternation. The government had won a resounding victory which they could hammer home in parliament and in the subsequent referendum; a victory whose extent the "national" front had never anticipated. The bitter fact remains that the answer to the call of liberation had resolved itself into

a reply by a fraction of its own supporters, and in the spending by the Treasury of £150,000. After its prodigious expenditure of money and lung power, 90 per cent of adult Germans had declared themselves perfectly content with slavery, so content that numbers of them refused to answer even a party call.

The effects were immediate. Of the triumvirate Hitler was wholly content. He had earned the gratitude of his paymasters, for his following had polled their full strength and he had obtained amazing publicity. For six months National Socialism had had the run of a powerful press organization and had taken full value of the opportunity. If everybody was laughing at the fiasco, everybody had now heard of Adolf Hitler and his merry men; the stage was set for a great party offensive. On Strasser's advice he promptly broke with the Nationalists; they were for the moment of no use to him. He threw the whole blame of the defeat on the Nationalist party which, as he ought—so he said—to have foreseen after their long bemiring of National Socialist ideals, had not been half so much “in earnest” against the Young plan as the anti-national Communists. A purely National Socialist agitation would have done far better; he would not forget the lesson. In the Baden elections a few days after the initiative the party took six seats from their late allies and as many in Luebeck; it caused them heavy loss in the communal and municipal elections in Prussia.

But in the ranks of nationalism there was rancour and depression. Even those who were as convinced as any Hugenbergite that the Young plan was a burden not to be borne, were aghast at the magnitude of the rebuff and some of those who were not so convinced, broke party discipline and spoke out. Dohna, an aristocrat of blameless Nationalist probity, bluntly told his party that a great “national” party was impossible; the less worthy wing would eat up the more worthy. Nationalism had acquired a leader who had led the noblest party in Germany up a blind alley from which extrication would be difficult and in which destruction might be possible. Even on the Right there were men of intelligence who were true prophets when they were brave enough to prophesy; for this display of courage Dohna was flung out of the party. Hugenberg was filled with all the unrepent-

tance of rage. He defended the creation of the "national front," answered the moderates with the threat that he would consider any thought of participation in a government which accepted the Young plan as treason and "the end of national culture," whatever that might mean. The opposition to him and his fellow-capitalists was led by the old aristocracy and, driven to fury, he declared war in advance on any attempt on their part to come to terms with "Marxism" by which he meant Populists, Centrists, Democrats, and the luckless Socialists who now, farther from Marxism than at any time in their intellectual history, had to suffer the perpetual stigma attached to any association, however meaningless, with its hated name. That he was about to wreck his party did not disturb that amateur of combinations who is conspicuous among German politicians for his total lack of any sense of loyalty to either party or principle; by wrecking it he intended to make it finally his party. The methods of big business were to be used to crush out competition and to make him sole managing director of a political monopoly; the personnel was a matter of indifference and if there were any gentlemen in the party to whom such methods were displeasing, the sooner he was rid of them and their silly scruples the better.

The "Freedom bill," dragged into the Reichstag as a result of the initiative, was of course overwhelmingly defeated clause by clause. It gave Curtius a splendid opportunity for his maiden speech as foreign minister. It was an able speech, but, unlike a Stresemann speech, it was dull. Still it was a dull debate. Hugenberg emulated Achilles and refused to utter a syllable and the sole brightness was supplied by the solemn, bespectacled ex-engineer Feder, joint and humourless author of the original National Socialist programme, who proposed that all those who accepted the Young plan should be hanged—a crude but characteristically effective method of realizing the one-party state. The voting alone was exciting. Clause One was defeated by 318 votes to 82; Clause Two by 312 to 80; Clause Three by 312 to 80, but on the "shameful clause" the minority fell to 60. A score of the most respected Nationalist members had abstained from voting. This time it was not a mere manoeuvre like the voting

in 1924 or 1927; it was a definite split, and not on the issue of the Freedom bill but on "the Hugenberg tyranny." A dozen deputies left the party; three others refused the party whip but did not resign; its best known member and for long its parliamentary leader, Westarp, resigned his chairmanship. The dissidents justified themselves variously; the frankest was the big industrialist Klönne, who said that Hugenberg had none of the qualities necessary for the leader of a political party; he was a vulgar party boss whose anti-Marxism was a mere catchword. The third and last stage of the fight was a further fiasco. When it came to a referendum in circumstances much more favourable than when the agitation was at its height, only 13·8 per cent voted for it; that was what Hitler meant when he said that "the whole of Germany is behind us."

The year, indeed, ended well for the government. They had not merely repelled attack; they had smashed it. It ended well, too, for the country. At midnight on the night of November 30 to December 1 the French completed the evacuation of the second zone of occupation; Ehrenbreitstein, Coblenz, Aachen were free again; on December 12 the last British soldier left German soil. While the National Socialists were exhausting a limited vocabulary against his achievement, the municipal authorities of Aachen and Coblenz broke off the rejoicings to lay wreaths of gratitude on the grave of Stresemann. All seemed well, but all in fact was over.

Even while the fight was raging on the Freedom bill, even before the death of Stresemann, there were ominous signs already visible that the world was entering into a period of economic distress. Into the causes of the crisis there is happily no necessity to go; one need merely indicate its effects on the German situation. The acceptance of the Young plan removed the last excuse for postponing the attempt to reorganize Germany's financial and economic position and put her in a position to meet her obligations. German finance had not been reckless, but it had been distinctly haphazard in its methods. After the recovery of 1925 expenditure of which that on reparations was relatively trifling had grown steadily and unchecked, and had been met at once by borrowing and by increased taxation. There was the most urgent need for

drastic economies everywhere and for a readjustment—there could be no decrease—of taxation, and so the political issues dramatically ceased to be political and became economic. It was pretty clear that to any far-reaching scheme of financial reform there would be determined resistance on the part of all those who were in receipt of subsidies of one kind or another, and that any scheme would be rendered difficult of application by the slump in world trade. The early winter of 1929 had seen the first financial panic in America, and in the classic land of "prosperity" crisis loomed ahead as production fell and unemployment increased. There were the same signs of approaching crisis elsewhere; all over the world production and prices were falling, tariff walls were rising, currencies were shaking, and the unbalanced were beginning to suggest the usual crisis remedies from autarchy downwards. By March 1930 it was obvious to most thinking people that the world was in for a genuinely bad time, and it was as obvious that its coming had caught governments and peoples off their guard, and that the position was not only economically but politically dangerous. No other country was so sensitive to "world crisis" as Germany. She needed capital to live and trade with which to make borrowing possible. If both were to be curtailed, then to avoid real economic distress a tremendous national effort would be needed. One says tremendous by force of habit; actually the effort needed was not tremendous; what had to be tremendous was the intelligence of rulers to see the realities of the position, their courage to say that sacrifice was necessary and the resolution of a nation thus unexpectedly disillusioned, to think of nothing else but getting on with the sacrifice.

The Young plan, whatever views one may hold on the economic wisdom of indemnities, had no creative influence at all on the crisis. Had the circumstances remained normal there was not the least doubt of the value of the Young plan to Germany with its complete definiteness on German indebtedness or of Germany's ability to pay its toll. That was the view of the enormous majority of thinking and expert opinion in 1930 and it has never been refuted. One can hardly sum up the situation better than in the words of the President in his manifesto to the nation on his

signature of the Young bills on March 18, 1930, remembering that they are not the words of a government apology, but represent the definite opinion of his advisers and of the best political minds in Germany:

With a heavy but with a firm heart I have, after mature and conscientious consideration, put my signature to the Young Bills. After hearing all the arguments for and against I have come to the conclusion that, in spite of the heavy burdens laid by the plan on the German people for many years to come, and in spite of the grave objections that can be raised against some of its provisions, the Young Plan as compared with the Dawes Plan represents an improvement and a relief, and from the economic and political points of view, progress upon the difficult path of liberation and reconstruction. . . .

The parliamentary battle over the Young Bills is ended with their becoming the law of the land. As a result, conflict over them in the German nation ought now to cease, that conflict which has called to life new antagonisms and seriously increased in our sore-tried nation those divisions which I regret so much. Therefore I earnestly admonish every German man and woman to be conscious of his and her duty to the Fatherland and the future of the nation, and overcoming divisions and antagonisms finally combine in united effort for our future. The political differences and conflicts of the past month must now give way to resolute practical work.

These were noble, statesmanlike words, but they fell nearly everywhere on deaf ears. The National Socialist organ answered with a cry of cold defiance:

We submit . . . that Reichspresident von Hindenburg has taken leave of Germany and betaken himself to a Young-colony. Therefore awakening Germany has taken leave of him.

That was to be expected, but better results were hoped for elsewhere. In vain; nine days later Mueller regretfully handed to the President the resignation of the Great Coalition ministry; he has the distinction of the longest single chancellorship in the history of the Republic.

There was nothing particularly sensational in the decision to resign. The budget bill for 1930-1931 was an honest endeavour

to meet a situation that was believed to be awkward, but was not regarded as dangerous. Disagreement on financial operations with the President of the Reichsbank, Schacht, who was busy qualifying to become the financial expert of the new nationalism by vehement denunciation of the plan he had helped to negotiate, drove the Socialist finance minister, Hilferding, to resign. His successor, a Populist, amended the bill, fell equally foul of Schacht but, a sterner fighter than his predecessor, drove his assailant to resign his presidency. Twice again under the pressure of circumstances he amended the bill, each time making it less and less favourable to the working-class in the opinion of that class until finally the trade unions struck and the Socialist party decided it must vote against the bill.

It was the later realization that the fall of the Great Coalition marked the end of parliamentary government in Germany that caused all the subsequent criticism of the Socialist action, the ostensible cause of its fall and of the opening of the doors of government to reaction. The criticism is unfair. The Socialist action was in itself normal and right, and in the opening ceremony all the parties played their part. The real criticism is that the government did not resign the moment it had smashed the "national" front. With the split in the Nationalist party the whole position had changed. Extremism had been badly beaten and discredited, and what was left was a great Socialist party and a handful of bourgeois parties whom nothing really separated but party committees. There were two facts that should have been plain. First, that for the post-Young plan policy the coalition had no mandate; the second was that, when it came to a question of apportioning the burden and dealing with an economic crisis, no Great Coalition could conceivably agree on a programme. The nation was not yet convinced that crisis was upon it; but it did appreciate *the fact* of additional burdens if it did not appreciate the direness of the necessity that went on adding to them. Now even in crisis it is not inconsistent with patriotism to have very definite views on how any burden should be apportioned; even to have class views. If anything was certain it was that the Socialist and the bourgeois view of "equality of sacrifice" was impossible

to reconcile. It was, therefore, quite as impossible for the Socialists to form part of a national crisis coalition as it was for Labour to join the National Coalition in this country a year later. In the impossibility of securing a majority for a Socialist solution, the only true course was for the Socialists at once to leave the government and throw on the bourgeois parties the onus of getting a majority together for a bourgeois solution. Unfortunately the dogged loyalty of the chancellor betrayed him once again; he had been entrusted with the task of getting on with the new tasks by the President, who had addressed a personal rescript to him, and he felt that it ought to be obeyed. But long before the rescript he should have seen that the coalition's task was done; seen, as Stresemann would have seen, that a unique chance was offered of securing a homogeneous coalition simply because at last it was the desperate interest of the parties of the Centre to have one and that to give them the chance to do so was not only not evasion of responsibility, but the only way to give Germany a chance of efficient government. If the bourgeois parties did not take it, that was not his business; his party and his programme would reap the advantage of their realism and their opponents' shortsightedness. If they did, then Germany would have had before the crisis a genuine coalition government faced with a stern opposition that would have been a fair opposition. Thus in crisis two buttresses would have been opposed to extremism, the political danger of affording an opportunity to extremism to make capital out of government indifference to distress would have been avoided, and definite remedies could have been applied with other, different and no less definite remedies waiting to be applied if the former failed.

But Mueller decided to stay on; a fateful decision which illustrates how necessary it is to submit to severe intellectual criticism what is submitted to one as one's duty. The result was that within the cabinet there was so direct a conflict between its members, both on grounds of principle and grounds of expediency, that there was no resolute tackling of the preliminaries to crisis, such as might well have avoided the worst of the later disasters, and the Socialist party, the nominal leader of the coalition, was asked

to accept the responsibility for a solution which, besides being feeble and partial, did not seem to them either good in itself or in the interests of their class. In the end what was possibly an accountancy dispute regarding the solvency of the unemployment insurance fund was made a class issue—the pockets of the rich or the cupboards of the poor. Quoting the words of the President on the duty of “sacrifice” on the part of those earning to help those who were not earning, the trade unions demanded a special tax on income; their adversaries retorted by demanding insurance economies and more indirect taxation, in itself a “sacrifice.” As there was no reconciliation possible between those who held that increased taxation meant increased unemployment and those who held that without increased taxation the problem of unemployment would be solved by starvation, and as no agreement could be reached either on what constituted sacrifice or who should offer the sacrifice, there was no solution except resignation. But it had been long enough delayed to give the crisis a good start and to imbue the common man with a profound distrust of his rulers. The fatal term “sacrifice” is a newcomer to the political vocabulary; sterner ages would have talked, like Pitt, of national exertions. Characteristically it transforms a positive into a negative conception, stressing acquiescence rather than endeavour. But to the ordinary man “sacrifice” still retains its religious connotations; to him an imposed sacrifice is a contradiction in terms. There was no sacrificial spirit in the nation because the ministry had never been able to agree either on the sacrifice or on the explanation why it was necessary. The ordinary man was conscious that things were becoming difficult; unemployment was increasing; taxation was increasing, for the burden of indirect taxation fell on the ordinary man and with the extremists gleefully calculating to the last pfennig how the individual suffered from the faults of his government, that individual ended by concluding that, whatever else was incomprehensible, it was quite clear that he was the sacrifice. For once the parties showed an extraordinary reluctance to bring down the government; their action was determined by the pressure brought to bear by the ordinary man outside who, faced with what he thought was

injustice, was determined that whatever happened the sacrifice would be borne by someone else.

The politicians were in more serious mood. The dismal trimming and hedging on the budget bill had made it clear to some of them that in the next months what would be necessary would be determination rather than brilliance, and that the nature of the remedy applied would be of less importance than the vigour with which it was applied—in a word, what was needed was “strong” government. The clinging to office of the Great Coalition had put out of men’s minds the thought of a bourgeois coalition; the politicians were toying with the idea of a cabinet with an agreed programme which would face parliament with the alternative of acceptance or having it imposed upon it. It is characteristic of German politics that the chief topic was not a solution of the economic crisis but of the “crisis of parliamentarism,” and it will not surprise the reader that in what have already been alluded to as “the political circles,” the former was regarded as an unpleasant possibility while the latter was seen as a horrible reality. It does not say a great deal for either the knowledge or the intuition of those circles, and it is the final condemnation of the politicians that at last these got their chance and with the connivance of certain politicians took it. The orthodox political crisis after Mueller’s belated resignation was to receive no orthodox solution.

In the Ministry of Defence sat General Wilhelm Groener, the last quartermaster-general of the old Imperial army; in an adjoining room sat his most intimate collaborator, whom he jestingly but affectionately referred to as his son, General Kurt von Schleicher. The older man—he was fifteen years the senior—was a Wuerttemberger sprung from the middle-class, a professional and not just a caste soldier, to whom soldiering and even war was a business with very little romance in it, necessitating an uncommon expenditure of mental and physical energy. He brought to the routine work of war what may be without offence called a civilian mind, which may explain why he was the best executive officer of the “Q” branch in Germany, and why in mufti he always looked far more like a real civilian than most of his col-

leagues; and as chief railways officer responsible for the transport up to time of the "million army" and as head of the special munitions department set up in 1916, he did work unsurpassed anywhere by a civilian expert. A man of the people, he understood men and how to handle them as well as command them. In this faculty of comprehension of others, in his studiousness and his unassumingness he was the very reverse of what the foreigner holds to be a Prussian officer, and it is at once a tribute to his ability and to Hindenburg's insight that, despite the prejudice against him in many quarters in the Prussian officers' corps, the marshal insisted on his taking Ludendorff's place when that officer finally retired.

But before that he had fallen foul of big business in the munitions department. Keen only to get guns and shells railed to the front, he proposed to stimulate the workers by limiting war profits, and it is a curious commentary on the alleged "dictatorial powers" of the Army Command that it could not save him. He had to depart to honourable exile as a chief of staff in Russia.

It was here that he met Schleicher, a Brandenburger of old family who had begun his military career in 1900 as a subaltern in the 3rd Infantry of the Guard. Seconded to the General Staff in 1913, captain in 1914, he was in August placed in charge of the bureau at General Headquarters dealing with affairs on what came to be known as the home front, where he remained till at his repeated request he was sent to do staff duty with a fighting division in Russia for a few months in 1917, returning thereafter to the bureau. He was quick enough to appreciate the difference between the unassuming Groener and other generals; in turn, Groener genuinely took to the gay young Guards officer who was so quick to take a point, so interested in serious topics, and so charming a companion. The officers in Russia never got over the impression that Leninist rule made upon them—or upon their men, and it is to their experiences there that one may trace that almost incomprehensible genuine dread of Communism that meets one at every turn in the history of the Republic, a dread for which the events of Berlin and Munich and the Communist party supply insufficient explanation. Groener studied Bolshevism

closely, with results that were to be decisive, for at the great crisis of 1918-1919 he was governed almost solely by the intense desire to submit to and do anything rather than have to witness a Bolshevik uprising in Germany. With his views his younger companion fully agreed, and when in September 1918 Groener was recalled to General Headquarters he transferred Schleicher at once to his personal staff.

Self-confident, rather a dandy, but entirely capable, Schleicher despite his war record was not in the least that type of "officer at the base" so detested, and not always unjustly, by the officer in the line—his commanding officer in Russia, anything but likely to be kind to an "office" soldier, paid tribute to his personal courage, coolness, and power of decision—and he proved himself not merely a useful but an invaluable subordinate. He had indeed a military mind and all the pride of his caste, but he had a curious mind and pride with him took no offensive form. Luck had made him a "political" officer, and the need for constant diplomacy in his dealings with civilians, some of whom were very important and very aristocratic civilians, had smoothed out the inevitable brusquenesses of a young guards officer. Frank, optimistic yet clear-sighted, gifted with a sense of humour, he had learned quickly how to get on with people, and had acquired a taste and also a flair for negotiation that made him invaluable in the days of the collapse when anxiety had made even his quiet-tempered, kindly chief a bad partner at the conference table. Both men as a result of their war experience had many civilian connections and on them fell the brunt of the negotiations with the revolutionary government. They carried out, with calm firmness, their own conception of patriotic duty. It was Groener, with Schleicher's aid, who persuaded Hindenburg of the necessity of supporting the new government simply because it was a government, who stiffened Ebert into taking his definite stand against revolution. It was Groener who got troops through to the Majority Socialist leaders. It was Groener again who, against the wishes of the stern professional soldier, Hindenburg, got the government to sanction the formation of those original "Freikorps" which wiped out Spartacism. It was Groener who later on controlled the situation

in the revolt against the Peace Treaty, and it was once again Groener who secured Seeckt's appointment, as the ablest soldier in Germany, as head of the new Reichswehr.

While Schleicher settled down to an important post in the Ministry of Defence, Groener turned civilian in good earnest. With many of his colleagues his relations were sadly strained, and criticism of his conduct in October to November 1918 and subsequently had been so sharply criticized by them that after the crisis was over he felt bound to demand investigation by a court of honour which decisively if coldly justified him. But the matter left a nasty taste in his mouth, and when he turned politician that and the contretemps at the Munitions Department made him turn democratic politician. He was unofficially a Democratic, officially an expert, Minister of Railways between 1920 and 1923, a period for his ministry of great change and difficulty, and divided his time thereafter between politics and the writing of scathing criticism of the Prussian leadership at the Marne. In 1928 it was only with a certain reluctance that he had consented to become Minister of Defence, an offer prompted by his one-time subordinate.

Inside the Defence Ministry Schleicher also had turned politician in his own manner and in a few years knew as much about the undercurrents of political life as anyone in Germany. Not that he ever studied politics seriously as a science. He was no student—a book like his old chief's, *The Testament of Graf Schlieffen*, was quite beyond his powers—but he was ambitious, intelligent, acquisitive of knowledge, and within his limits critical, though of men and measures rather than of ideas. He had liked the limited diplomacy of his war-time posts, and to the larger diplomacy which the cynic calls intrigue he took like a duck to water, developing a passion for the pulling of strings and the manipulation of puppets and finding ample opportunity to complete his education as one of the most accomplished intriguers in Germany.

Yet he was never just an intriguer. He had intelligence as well as cleverness and his intrigue always was directed to larger ends. It was to Seeckt and himself that the elevation of the Reichswehr

above politics was due, and the elevation was as valuable to the country as the accomplishment of it was difficult. The old army had been above politics in the sense that it dominated them, and it was difficult to readjust outlooks in the times of humiliation when everything seemed to justify the reassertion by the military element of its old power. The new army was rent with political differences and personal jealousies; there was the problem of the "Freikorps" now that the immediate need for them had passed; there were the problems presented by types like Luettwitz and Lossow; there were officers perpetually on the verge of indiscipline and even treason; there were officers who had their political connections and sought to use them, and an army of uncertain troops which had to be turned into the finest professional force in Europe. It was the reserved Seeckt who, after the shock of the Kapp "putsch," laid down the law that the Reichswehr should be non-political and should be the servant of a mystical "state" by becoming itself a mystical state within the state, and till his retirement he had lived in an icy, aloof Olympus of his own, maintaining rigidly a self-imposed silence and steering a wary course guided solely by his own conception of patriotism even when it involved the breaking of the law behind the government's back. To him the Reichswehr was the nation in embryo. It represented the last buttress of public order, the sole defence of Germany against aggression, and it must be kept intact at all costs for a great crisis. Only when it was a case of the last necessity must its intervention be permitted by its chiefs. It was a conception which his officers ended by accepting completely, with, however, not always permanent results as events were to show, and as no occasion arose to put loyalty to a strain, the Reichswehr passed for what in a real sense it was—a loyal servant to the Republic as representing Germany.

In all that work he was aided with remarkable zeal by Schleicher. But the subordinate went much further than his chief. If the political situation perplexed the latter, it fascinated the former. More sociable by nature but less stable than Seeckt, he did not maintain the principle of non-politicalness for himself. If he agreed with Seeckt that the army must not meddle in

politics, even if it cost the army chiefs the friendship, as in some cases it did, of their own class, he personally believed that it was the duty of those chiefs—or some of them—so to meddle in politics as to prevent a political situation arising that would involve the Reichswehr, a risky but enormously congenial game. He knew everybody in political life who was anybody and everybody who might turn out later to be somebody, and, especially after Seeckt's retirement, he became more and more a political, though not yet a public, figure. Officials, politicians, journalists—he knew them all. Ministers discussed things with him, though they were not always important ministers; with Stresemann, who had curious views on inclusiveness and catholicity of acquaintance, he never seems to have got really in touch. Heads of departments talked to him; secretaries of state liked to hear his views and a lifelong friendship with Oskar von Hindenburg, now his father's unofficial adjutant, brought him into that highly important circle that tends always to form round a head of the state, though he was no particular favourite of the old marshal, who instinctively distrusted soldiers who were brilliant political talkers.

But Hindenburg recognized his ability, though he did not always recognize that it was the ability of tact rather than of intellect. His suggestion of Groener as the Reichswehr minister was a tactful suggestion, for, despite the coolness after 1919, he knew that the marshal had a warm regard for his old quartermaster-general, and he would have been the first to confess that it was that regard that had determined the selection and not the long constitutional argument by which he had defended it. Once again the two men, old friends, were working together, and it was with the new minister's full approval that Schleicher promoted himself to the status of a secretary of state, which meant that he had direct access to the President. The presence of Groener in the Ministry of Defence was, though that officer was unaware of it, an essential part of the great scheme that was forming.

By 1930 Kurt von Schleicher was a very important person in Germany although very few people knew it. Fewer still knew how close his ear was to every political ground and how little

he missed, or what ties he was forming with men hardly known to the general public and not regarded as coming men even in their own parties, ties that might one day serve to hold a government or even a new party together. By 1930 Kurt von Schleicher was also a very worried man. Now that he has become a figure of controversy obscured by alternate deluges of laudation and denunciation, it is not easy to disentangle the truth of him from a long process of caricature. But of his general position there is little doubt. He had very definite views on politics. He wanted "strong" government by which, like everyone else who uses the phrase, he meant a government which shared his own views and would act determinedly in spite of opposition in carrying them out. To him the end of the political struggle viewed as a whole must be the restoration of Germany, not to a position of legal equality, but to her old position of power. The means were indifferent—only the end mattered. As a soldier he thought in terms of war; as a political soldier he thought in terms of national unity; and as an apostle of unity he thought in terms of authoritarian leadership. As a Prussian nobleman he felt indeed that the Prussian aristocracy was the obvious leader, but he had had certain experiences with its representatives since 1919 which had made him anything but bigoted. He was ready to accept almost any leadership provided it was strong and shared his views; and, after all, there was no historical reason why Social Democracy might not throw up leaders of the same excellent views as, but of greater strength and character than, those of 1919.

To him as a responsible official of the Ministry of Defence the test of leadership was very simple: would it make Germany capable in all senses of not losing the next war? A "strong" government meant a "strong" Germany, a government which would be capable again of realizing the idea of the nation in arms.* Seeckt, an intellectual soldier, had been able to rid his thought from the bondage of the idea of strength as mass; he had passed from the negative acceptance of the small army

* The "nation in arms" no longer means the nation in uniform; it is a conception compatible with a small army, so long as the nation is so solidly behind the army that the civilian feels himself and is willing to be treated as a soldier.

allowed by the treaty to the positive working out of a strategy and a tactics based on the employment of a small, highly mobile, highly trained, abundantly munitioned, professional army against what would be, despite their apparent strength, clumsy hordes. Hence his steady refusal to let the Reichswehr be mixed up in politics; he could not afford either to lose a single man of it in civil strife or let it be alienated by political action from any section of the nation—Communists, of course, were on their own confession not a section of the nation—or let its attention be diverted into other than serious military channels. Schleicher was no fool, but his intellect was not of the same calibre as Seeckt's. He still thought in terms of mass. Seeckt's relations with the "Freikorps," whom he detested as militarily undisciplined and incompetent, were confined after 1921 to the avoidance of any clash between them and his precious Reichswehr. To him they might be of political, they were certainly not of military, importance. To Schleicher, on the other hand, their military importance and so the importance of their successors, the Hitlerite Storm Troopers, was fundamental. They were, in fact, to him the indispensable reserves, the indispensable nucleus of unwieldy masses of the 1914 type, and the more they were trained, the more they were armed, the better. Everything must be done to bring them into cordial relations with the Reichswehr and the future General Staff. Officially the "Freikorps" were all disbanded; in one form or another many of them retained their organization under the protecting wing of the Ministry of Defence, which in this case meant the wing of General von Schleicher. Men talked openly of the maintenance of the "Black Reichswehr" and the employment the Ministry found for them; the existence of unnecessary "frontier guards" was also a matter for whispered talk, as was the existence of concealed weapons, and those who talked had no doubt as to the identity of the ultimately responsible party. But as most of the hotheads had cooled down, gone in for extremist politics and now kept outrages strictly to private internal feuds, no one found any particular cause for censure except a few Socialists and pacifists who had tender consciences, or desired to embarrass the government. The Communists, feebly busy with their own

private army, had no particular ground for protest. So long as the Allies could not prove that a trick was being played on them such, *multis mutatis mutandis*, as had been played on Napoleon by the ancestor of the ministry, few people could see that any particular harm was being done. A purist might have said that a failure to honour one's signature disgraced the nation, but a patriot rarely, and a defeated patriot never, is a purist. After all, it was the Allies' business.

A purist would, of course, have cashiered Schleicher, but in the absence of purists he had little German interference to fear. But what he did fear by 1930 was the dwindling numbers of his irregulars and the steady accession of likely recruits to the National Socialists and therefore away from his sphere of influence. That potential soldiers of the Reich should be used as a private army shocked his ideas of what was fitting, and he did his best in his tedious, intriguing way not to abolish the Storm Troops, but to get control of them, only to come up against a blank and un-negotiable wall. Although it had been a handful of civil policemen who had scattered the Hitlerites on that second but no less disgraceful Ninth of November, Hitler knew perfectly well that the real cause of his defeat was the Reichswehr—Seeckt, Schleicher, Lossow, and the honourable, stupid soldiers who had refused to march at his bidding. Deep within his heart he nursed a deadly grievance; he hated the very idea of the Reichswehr, a hate that is at the bottom of his demand, made in the days of irresponsibility and maintained till only the Reichswehr could save him, for the dissolution of the professional army, and particularly did he hate its actual leaders.* With several of the National Socialist heroes, notably Roehm and Goering, Schleicher had succeeded in establishing friendly relations though there was no particular love lost on either side, and he had agents among the ex-Freikorps men, but that was not enough to bridge the gap. Hitler did not merely refuse to put a single one of his mercenaries under the Defence Ministry; he would have none at all of Schleicher's patronage. It was his army and so Germany's, while

* He is a good hater; not till 1934 had he a chance to murder Schleicher; when the chance came it was taken, Kahr (v. p. 157) paid the penalty too on June 30.

the Reichswehr was merely a buttress of a detestable regime. It might eventually absorb the Reichswehr; it would most assuredly not be absorbed by it. What was worse was the discovery that National Socialism was tampering with the Reichswehr. Schleicher took quick action and Hitler retorted with a wild anti-Reichswehr manifesto ending with: "To the gallows with Schleicher." Between the two it was open war.

And so by 1930 the political situation, as it affected what it was his business to study, the military situation, had begun to worry the general in no small measure. On most political issues he kept an open mind; although he was by predilection "national," he was, as a military expert, judging, as it was his duty to judge, from the military point of view, quite capable of thinking out a "national" policy that was fundamentally opposed to all the Nationalist policies. For the present Nationalist leaders he had little sympathy. He was too much of a realist to appreciate Seldte, too much of a gentleman to appreciate Hugenberg, and too much of a Prussian aristocrat to appreciate Hitler; and he was quite shrewd enough to appreciate men so different as Stresemann and Hermann Mueller. For him the abiding fact in the political situation was that between them Hugenberg and Hitler had wrecked the "national" unity and rendered the Right, where naturally he expected to find the best bases of strong government, temporarily *hors de combat*. Though in the spectacle now presented by the parliamentary system he could see little sign of a basis anywhere, he was still sufficiently under the influence of Groener and the atmosphere of loyalty radiated from the presidential palace, not to make the mistake of identifying "strong" government with unconstitutional government. All the tradition of his caste coupled with his own sad experiences, made him reject the identification of "strong" government with revolutionary government. Fundamentally he, no more than any other Prussian officer who knew his trade, ever did or could understand Hitler, and to him much of Hitler's programme and a good many of Hitler's lieutenants were anathema. He did not fear a successful Hitler revolution in 1930. What he did fear was the growth of Hitler's army as a result of "weak" government, an attempt at

a *coup d'état* and the appeal to the Reichswehr to prevent it. To such an appeal the Reichswehr could not remain deaf now and he believed that the one result of the civil war which, if things went far enough, their intervention would involve, would be to make things easier for that ultimate Communist rising, still to him an ever-present possibility so utterly appalling that the mere mention of it rendered him, as it rendered so many others, incapable of coherent thought.

Hitler's private army was not the only Richmond in the field. There was the Reichsbanner, the association for the defence of the Republic, with its growing fighting section; there was the Stahlhelm; there were Communist Red Guards; there were half a score of other associations and organizations—none perhaps, at the moment, very formidable, yet, if one had the military imagination, the parties seemed like phantoms and these the only realities. If they were all let loose the Thirty Years War would rank as a minor catastrophe. In cool moments of professional judgment, he knew that militarily these formations were about as valueless as they were politically, and that they had not a real leader among them, but like most of his contemporaries he had had visions of what such formations could do in Ireland, in Russia, in the East, and he could not but remember that the gallant lads of Langemarck had had far less training than the great majority of the present "amateurs." The more he studied his pictures of a possible future the more their unpleasant features obtruded themselves.

Long ago he had joined the "political circles," but out of these and from his many party political acquaintances he had created a little and rather more intimate circle—Bruening, ex machine gun officer and since 1929 leader of the Centrum in parliament, Hugenberg's *bête noire* the ex-naval officer Treviranus, and others, men of his own age—he was forty-seven—of the war generation and nearly all survivors of 1918. For weeks now, that little circle had been discussing the situation with ever-increasing gloom. They saw the real issue was not the Young plan nor disarmament nor Hitler, but the economic crisis that was approaching, a crisis which might end if things went on as they were going with the

Treasury penniless and the people starving. In the last debates of the Great Coalition Bruening had sprung into prominence with a series of passionate appeals in the name of elementary self-defence for a sane financial policy, cost what it might, and for a government that would tell the nation the truth, state the remedy, and enforce its will. This was a commonplace in the circle which had long since come to the not unnatural or unfair conclusion that it was the continuance of the spirit of perpetual abdication that was at the bottom of the trouble. Stresemann with whom they disagreed on many other grounds had at least been free from it, but his generation had supplied no other like him. What was wanted was that the young men nourished not on the tradition of abdication, but on the spirit of the great retreat, should take up the task of government and, having taken it up, should claim the right to govern against parties and their executives. The circle agreed; it also agreed that the natural head of such a government was Bruening, the most prominent politician of them all. It worked out a programme; a real programme, not a mere ministerial declaration such as the "old men" had favoured; a programme to be carried out at all costs, though none of its details could count on overwhelming party support. Bruening believed in it; there is no need to assert that Schleicher did not. At first the former was inclined to shrink from the prospect thus opened up to him, but the call of duty made the hesitation only momentary. As the parliamentary leader of the second biggest party in parliament he was in the running for office. Why not take it sooner than later? It was high time the young men took over; if they shrank from seizing the chance to take over, they were no better than the "old men." If the President summoned him, he would accept the chancellorship.

While the coalition was breaking up, Schleicher was sounding the presidential circle. Oskar von Hindenburg cordially agreed; so did the more important Meissner, two useful advocates with the President then beginning his consultations with the party leaders, leading politicians and officials. In his official capacity Schleicher came to tender his advice to Hindenburg who welcomed a uniform with a sigh of relief. Schleicher put the case

simply—economic crisis upon them; fanaticism on Right and/or Left allied with distress; national dissolution; armed uprisings; the intervention of the Reichswehr; a military dictatorship or Bolshevism. The President heavily agreed. Schleicher warmed to his task. He discoursed on the factions and factiousness of the old politicians, on the need for a new departure with new men, the necessity for a cabinet with authority which would, with the support of the President and by the constitutional exercise of his powers, be able to take the necessary action with the necessary swiftness. The new chancellor must enjoy the President's complete confidence, because the latter would have to trust to him to advise the use of the powers which the President possessed. Again the President agreed though less heavily. More, he knew precisely the man for the post—Hermann Mueller. Schleicher was aghast; here was something he had not foreseen. Urgently he pointed out the impossibility of a Socialist carrying out the necessary measures or being entrusted with the enforcement of a presidential policy. The other parties would be solidly against him; the political impartiality of the President would be impugned; not even Hindenburg could govern Germany with the Socialists and such a Socialist against all the rest; it would be a direct provocation to the "national" elements. But the President did not appear particularly impressed. He had his own peculiar ideas about "national" politicians—he disliked Hugenberg and he detested Hitler—ideas which a long course of political argument and recent events had only reinforced. He was legitimately out of sympathy with the old Nationalists for the moment—they had been very tepid in his defence against Hitlerite insult—and he instinctively had a distrust of clericals. As the impartial head of the state he thought he had the right to like as he liked without looking at party labels; one had not looked at party labels when one was selecting the leader of a shock division; why look now? He had a genuine regard for Mueller. Despite all superficial differences they were men of the same stamp, solid, slow-thinking, ageing, and perhaps just a little bewildered and apprehensive before the growing chaos, but each with a dour patriotism of his own. With Mueller, who had none

of the loquacity and argumentativeness of the younger generation, a man who never lectured, with whom it was easy to talk and whom also it was easy to command, he had got on better than with the average run of the politicians who plagued him. He definitely liked the man who had signed the Versailles Treaty.

Schleicher redoubled his arguments, but Hindenburg was obstinate; he wanted Mueller. Meissner was appealed to; his son was appealed to; finally Groener, to whom he was still sentimentally attached though he had less confidence in him than the defence minister suspected, was brought in. All agreed with Schleicher. Groener was especially vehement. Such an appointment in such circumstances would be fatal from the point of view of the Reichswehr. He at any rate could no longer be minister, and more in sorrow than in anger developed what he said was the army view at length and with great cleverness, for at any moment he might be interrupted with a parade-ground rasp that the only duty of the army was to obey orders. Hard pressed and considerably annoyed, the old marshal yielded—two at least of the protagonists he never forgave—and prepared firmly to make unanswerable objections to any of the obvious candidates. But here Schleicher's genuine talent for diplomacy stood him in good stead. With due diffidence he pointed out that all the very obvious candidates were already discredited; besides, one could hardly expect Mueller to make way for one of his colleagues after the fiasco of the coalition's end; a new man, a good man was necessary. He asked the President to consider the claims of Bruening.

Heinrich Bruening, doctor of economics, was then just forty-six. Born of a middle-class family in Munster, he was a delicate, shy, but brilliant boy who won laudation from teachers and professors. But although laudation came generously he was temperamentally mistrustful of himself, and from sheer nervousness of leaving the warm, carefree life of the university for the cold responsibilities of life outside it took so long a time to choose a career that the war surprised him while he was completing his thesis for his doctorate in Bonn. He volunteered at once, but was rejected, finished his thesis, and took a brilliant economics degree, refused an offer to remain and teach, and volunteered again. This

time he was accepted, and in May 1915 trudged up to the Argonne front as an infantry private, was promptly wounded and sent home again to be cured and trained for a commission. It is characteristic of him that he specialized, and it was as a machine-gun officer that he returned to France—the Somme, Paaschendaële, the March offensive. On the black day of August 8/9, 1918, Machine-Gun Company 12 held with the 261st Regiment the line that the Allies broke through, held it with what the local commander described as “unparalleled heroism.” In the closing weeks of tragedy the company was constantly in action, and at the end was attached to the “Group Winterfeldt,” one of the best of the picked fighting units. Bruening’s men thought so much of him that they elected him to the Soldiers’ Council.

The war worked a transformation in him; in the long-drawn agony of the line he won confidence in himself and, as happened to so many others, physical and mental health. The tremendous experience had an abiding influence; he could never forget that he had led men in battle; to him the mystical call of the front line, the line of endurance, patriotism, and comradeship when hope was lost, was an ever-present reality, and to its spirit he appealed at every crisis of life.

Back in Germany he swelled temporarily the ranks of the black-coated unemployed—his was not the spirit of the “Freikorps”; he was not a born fighter—and like many other Catholic ex-soldiers drifted to an organization which sought to interest the university type of man and find him employment in social work. He helped to organize conferences, got commissions to lecture, and made useful friends, among them Stegerwald, then Prussian minister for social welfare, who took him to be his secretary. Stegerwald was not only a man of personality and ability, of rather democratic tendencies and social idealism, but, as the leader of Catholic trade unions, a Centrist politician of great influence. He was then endeavouring to unite the unions so as to present a Christian democratic front to “Marxism,” and he sent his secretary, of whom he thought very highly, to direct the work—Bruening’s first contact with political and economic realities. He had none of Stegerwald’s fitful democratic fervour,

although he was an honest republican. But as an officer he believed in leadership, as a German in discipline, and as a Catholic in authority; he was never a political intriguer like so many of the Centrist Left, but fully shared the views of the Right—though not all its economic selfishness—and its episcopal advisers that German Socialism and German Liberalism were drowning in a morass of materialism and drowning the future with them; that the need of the nation was for a great national effort at purification of life and motive to fit it for the uphill task of recovery, and that the proper course for Germany was away from revolutionism to a sane ordered nationalism, democratic only in the sense that the Catholic church is democratic and based on that church's conception of the Christian ideal. Despite his mystical faith, he characteristically won his reputation not as an evangelist but as an economist, and in a branch of economics least of all susceptible to mysticism, as several excellent gentlemen ought to recognize—national finance. He had not been long in parliament—Stegerwald got him put in 1924 on the party list in Silesia and he was, while the Centrum lasted, steadily re-elected for Breslau—before he was accepted as a forceful orator with a grip of facts and figures, and considerable gifts of exposition. He became a party expert on economic questions, standing for the old tradition of stern saving and sound accountancy, and readily and fearlessly criticizing cabinets and statesmen and even the pundits of economic unorthodoxy in his own party. By 1927 when Dr. Bruening, tall, erect, still a little inclined to stand at attention, the dark hair creeping back to the occiput, the shrewd eyes twinkling behind heavy glasses, got up to speak on any of his pet subjects the whole House listened. In the autumn of 1929 he had been elected to the parliamentary leadership of the party and the appointment was regarded as a victory of the anti-Socialist Right wing; he was beginning to be talked of in the lobbies as a coming minister, although in republican Germany making oneself a nuisance to the government was not the usual way to get into office. And he was also known in circles where it was important to be known. In these he had met Schleicher, who had recognized in this innate Conservative with democratic, but austere democratic, leanings

a kindred spirit and respected in him a moral and intellectual sincerity deeper rooted than his own.

This was the man whose name was now dropped into the President's ear. The marshal was interested. A member of the Suicide Club? In Winterfeldt's group? Did good work in '18? Schleicher expounded his friend's claims to consideration, detailed his qualities, quoted his speeches. The marshal listened with more attention. He identified now the man described as a Centrist leader, but possibly all that he really saw was a young man in steel helmet and field gray, dirty, exhausted, sick to the soul, squinting down a dulled gun-barrel; a machine-gunner of '18 ought to be good enough. And so the President agreed. We have no details of the interview of March 28; Bruening left it the youngest chancellor the German Republic had yet had.

The selection of Bruening did not cause any particular surprise in the political world which realized that, in the circumstances, it was obvious that the task of cabinet-making would fall in the first instance to the Centrum, but to the general public, beginning to feel that the situation was more serious than it had thought, the experiment of putting at the head of the ministry an untried, rather academic parliamentary figure aroused no great enthusiasm. Nor did his cabinet. It was a curious body. From the old cabinet the new Chancellor took over the Democratic, Populist, and Bavarian members, and of course Groener; the Centrum proved its unity and its preponderance in the cabinet by sending an ex-chancellor, Wirth, to serve at the Interior under a colleague who had never yet held cabinet rank, and to the Ministry of Economics the new chancellor's old chief and trade-union leader Stegerwald, both of them being regarded as leaders of the Centrist Left. The Economic party was represented by the able lawyer Brecht, the rebel Nationalists supplied Treviranus, and one of the most respected members of the official Nationalist party, Martin Schiele, an old opponent of Stresemann, defied Hugenberg's veto and took office as minister of agriculture. It was not a particularly impressive cabinet, but it had certain features that appealed. It contained three wearers of the Iron Cross (First Class) in the chancellor, Brecht, and Treviranus, all young men—

Treviranus was still under forty. They called the ministry the "Front Line Cabinet," and the paragraphists dubbed them "the Three Musketeers"—a little cruelly, for there was no d'Artagnan; with the most Christian and credulous charity it is impossible to see Schleicher just in that rôle. But three "front line" men were a novelty which appealed to the public sentimentalism and a novelty which rather curtailed the extreme liberty of criticism which the ex-service men's organizations had been permitting themselves. The revolt of Schiele seriously embarrassed Hugenberg, not only because there was a section in the party who approved the former's action, though they were not yet prepared to leave the party, but because Schiele was a most notable defendant of agrarian interests who was credited with having worked out a comprehensive scheme to help the farmer. His appointment would certainly for the moment attract support not merely from the revolted agrarian parties but from wide circles of the official party.

To have put Hugenberg in so difficult a position was a clever piece of tactics, for on the votes of the official Nationalists the cabinet's fate would depend, and it had been made extraordinarily difficult for Hugenberg to vote against it until at least it had been proved a failure. To the political critic the composition of the cabinet meant one thing in particular, that the right wing of the Centrists had had its way and that the united party had broken definitely with the Socialists, at least so far as the government of the Reich was concerned. By including at once a politician with Left tendencies like Wirth and another so far to the Right as Schiele it implied the formation of a great new bourgeois bloc which might aspire, if it liked, to be the basis of the great middle-class party of which Stresemann had dreamed and even of his party of the younger generation. Its new leaders were indeed unknown to the people, but they were at least not yet party automata, and if the spectacle of youth at the helm was a pleasing one, the new coalition of parties suggested an appearance of unity which in the present lack of unity on Right and Left might from appearance become reality. On both Right and Left there was the most formal disunity. There was no hope of reconciliation

between Socialists and Communists. On the Right the "national" front was in complete confusion, and if the angry quarrels of the leaders was any criterion the disunity here was quite as formal as on the Left. That gave the ministry an appearance of true constitutionalism as against Socialism on the one hand and multi-form reaction on the other, while at the extremities there was only frank revolutionism. In 1930 the cabinet-makers had no intention whatever of destroying either the constitution or the Republic; in a way they felt themselves the guardian of both, and by good government they hoped to give the bloc a national rather than a Reichstag majority. At present both majorities were denied them, but they believed that during the interim when quick solutions were needed that they would never be without one. The action of the cabinet was on the whole to be anti-Socialist, and it seemed reasonably clear that if Hugenberg took action against it, that would not only result in a further Nationalist split but would lead to a dissolution for which the extremists on both wings were clamouring. If the omens were to be trusted, the clamour arose from the conviction that an election would greatly strengthen the Communists and the National Socialists, and to strengthen either was hardly likely to be a policy to commend itself to Hugenberg. Feeling that they had that redoubtable adversary in a cleft stick, they felt that the ministry, for all the fact that it could from its own parties count on barely two hundred votes on a division, was in a very strong position which it had only to consolidate. It was, in fact, the government that should have been formed some months ago, and it was a good government. But it came too late, and it would have needed a Stresemann at its head to compensate for that loss of time that was fatal to it.

The cabinet lost no time in coming to grips with parliament. The new chancellor was unpleasantly frank. He based its whole claim to the Reichstag's support on the Presidential message of a few days before appealing for national unity in a crisis, declaring that its task was one of reconciliation in which all men of good will ought to co-operate. To the details of the economic programme, which was merely a slightly more drastic version of the preceding ministry's plan and still failed to tackle the question of taxation,

the deputies paid far less attention than to the frank warning of the chancellor that the new ministry represented a "last attempt" to secure national salvation in co-operation with parliament, and that if that co-operation was not forthcoming the necessity for swift decisions would compel the ministry to look elsewhere for support.

The declaration was possibly necessary. It was certainly high time that the Reichstag was warned against the consequences of factional obstructionism, but it may be seriously questioned if the manner of the warning was either necessary or calculated to produce the desired result. If there is crisis in the state it is the height of political unwisdom to complicate it by unnecessarily introducing constitutional controversy. That was particularly true in the present case where the constitutional issue involved was one on which the parties were particularly sensitive and was not merely a legal issue to be settled by an appeal to document or precedent, but raised questions affecting the continued existence of a democratically achieved regime. The result of the declaration was that for the rest of the Republic's life practical politics yielded to a prolonged constitutional wrangle which occupied all the attention of the politicians at an hour when a constitutional battle was of all things the most likely to be fatal to the system on whose behalf it was ostensibly fought.

The manner of the declaration left the future course of the ministry in doubt. But the personality of the chancellor made it reasonably certain. His conception of a chancellor was that of a man entrusted with the duty of governing, and to perform that duty he was prepared to use the constitutional powers conferred on the executive power to the limit. In that attitude there was nothing unconstitutional, but it was an attitude which, if translated into action, was very different from that adopted by his predecessors. Unlike them he conceived himself as an executive agent responsible to the nation and not to parliament; his curious military outlook made him identify the nation with its constitutional head. As a soldier he obeyed his general while fighting for his country. He was in the position of a subaltern occupying a post by the authority of the commander-in-chief, and

he was prepared to dispute even to the extent of standing trial by court martial the right of interference by any other constituted authority. The text of the constitution justified him; the spirit of it and the precedents of the past did not.

The establishment in office of a minority cabinet with promise of support within the limits of the constitution—up to then no support beyond that was contemplated—was certainly constitutional. The President was well within his rights and he was supported by precedent; from the purely juridical point of view his action was more defensible than Ebert's appointment of Cuno. There had been no question of refusing a dissolution. The retiring chancellor had not asked for one, and there is no right conferred on any opposition of demanding one while it remains an opposition. The novel features attending the formation of the cabinet in the intervention of what may loosely be called the President's private advisory council were as yet unknown to the general public, and in any case they were not unconstitutional. But in the lobbies these features were known and they caused intense indignation, especially in the Socialist ranks where the intervention of the Reichswehr in politics was bitterly criticized. Strictly speaking there had been no intervention in the sense of a military *pronunciamento*. At that period, when the fronde had not yet developed, Schleicher was still and always professed to be a "parliamentary" Nationalist, and he was entitled to claim that his initiative, if the outcome of a rather liberal interpretation of the duties of the position which was after all condoned by his chief and by many politicians of repute and unimpeachable republican faith, was well calculated to produce results.

It was still too soon to speak of a "presidential" party. There was so far not yet even the embryo of one. When in answer to Socialist criticisms of his foreshadowing of emergency legislation Bruening replied that such legislation would be resorted to only "if there was no longer any hope that the parliament and the parties would fulfil their functions," he indeed did foreshadow the possibility of the cabinet ruling against parliament. But he went no further, and he knew and parliament knew that such ruling could eventually be maintained only by a *coup d'état*, and

that from the actual cabinet and the coalition supporting it no *coup d'état* was to be feared. Actually he was appealing for a concentration of the middle-class parties, and to a certain extent appealing for it over the head of parliament and the party executives; the touching faith in the "nation" as a vast patriotic body unfettered by party ties and capable of reaching a united decision against all their so-called leaders is the greatest of those illusions which prevent German politicians from becoming statesmen, an illusion that has received its final consecration in the imposition of unity by machine-guns and the honesty of the belief that machine-guns are spiritual weapons.

The real criticism to be made of the new chancellor is not that he wanted to be a dictator under a commanding authority, but that he did not see the complete impossibility of his appeal for unity being answered. In a democracy the test of the answer is that made by the coalition government in England, the appeal to the country. With the realization that that appeal would not be answered in the Germany he had to govern should have come the realization that there was not the slightest chance that it would be answered by the Reichstag. What he was wanting was really supernatural deliverance; it is the duty of the statesman to make supernatural deliverance superfluous. He had no clear course traced out for himself; he merely indicated a series of possibilities which he hoped would not arise. He did not really expect resistance; he merely expected rhetorical defiance. He did not seek to consolidate all the middle-class parties into a government party; he merely sought to neutralize their possible hostility and appeal to their interests. He claimed to be a national leader, but there is no place in the constitution for a national leader who is not also the leader of a party or a coalition majority, and as the leader of a confessional party he could not possibly be the leader of a national coalition in any sense that attaches to the word leader, nor could there be any truly national coalition so long as there was a Centrum party which insisted on leading.

For the moment, however, the issues were obscure. The natural irritation of the parties prevented them appreciating the whole significance of the new departure and the chancellor's justification

of it, and—again for the moment—the prospects of the new government looked considerably brighter than the prospects of the nation. The Left parties promptly tabled a vote of no-confidence as was their right, for they were on the whole the official opposition, and as was their duty, for the whole policy of the government was anti-Socialist and to a certain extent anti-working-class. The details of the government programme were indeed calculated to conciliate the bourgeois classes, and public opinion in these classes rallied to them to a degree that could hardly have been foreseen by those who confined their sphere of investigation to the Reichstag lobbies. Even on the deputies, cynical as they now were, the gloom of the chancellor, the evidences of the deep sense of responsibility under which he laboured and the unusual firmness with which in advance he disowned the abdicating tendencies of his predecessors made a very real impression. It was the first time since Stresemann, in the sickness of anger, had challenged parliament to do its worst that a chancellor had spoken to parliament as a master and not as a suitor, and the change of tone won more approval than the party managers cared to admit.

This was a nasty situation for Hugenberg on whom the fate of the government depended. He had at once announced his hostility to it; he had to, in view of the truculence of the Hitler faction. Would he carry his disapproval to the logical conclusion? At first with an eye to the "national" union of the Right he proposed to be consistent and carry the party into the opposition lobby. A section of it at once refused to follow him and faced him at once not merely with the threat of another split, but with the consolidation of the fractions that had already cast off allegiance into a new party which would leave in the official party nothing but Hugenberg's personal following. Before the alternative of eating his words or loss of power, the Nationalist leader found no difficulty in making up his mind. He voted with the government and the no-confidence motion was rejected by 253 votes to 187.

The figures indicated how nearly a bourgeois coalition was within reach of an independent majority and, if Bruening had been as clever a parliamentarian as he was an able politician, he

would have forced issue after issue until he had driven Hugenberg from the field. But Bruening was not a clever parliamentarian and the vote lulled him to a sense of false security. Hugenberg indeed made plain his reasons; he did not want to provoke a crisis; his action implied no acceptance of responsibility or pledge of support; the aim of the Right remained a Right coalition and the union of all "national" groups and parties, an aim which incidentally received recognition from Hitler in the shape of an ostentatious withdrawal from all co-operation with the Hugenberg faction. As a result, Bruening felt that from Hugenberg he had nothing to fear, discounting entirely his enormous power as a moulder of opinion in the country. He had indeed nothing to fear from him in parliament. Not only was his party divided, but on the Left there had been signs that opposition would not be pushed too far and that a union of Right and Left was almost impossible. It was noteworthy that eminent Socialists, including the late chancellor, had abstained from voting, a procedure which it would have taken a good deal of false logic to defend, and it seemed, therefore, plausible that "arrangements" could always be come to. At the very outset of his new departure Bruening insensibly fell into the old Centrist way of basing existence not only on keeping possible adversaries steadily divided, but on never ceasing to regard them as possible allies. The net result of the vote was that all the parties settled down with a sigh of relief to the good old juggling game. The cabinet had its majority; there was no need for exceptional powers; the pleasant system of bargaining would maintain it in power until it would be too late for even its determined chancellor to take independent action. In the discussions and forecasts after the vote hardly one of the omniscient got near to a true appreciation of the actual situation, much less to a correct prophecy of what was to follow.

The cabinet followed up its victory by at once submitting its financial proposals and economic programme to the Reichstag. The government majority fell to six, an interesting proof of the failure to get a coalition programme, but the proposals, a clever blend of help to agriculture, relief to industry, and readjustment of taxation, were through. The chancellor indeed had to

repeat his threat that he would not accept the consequences of defeat, but it is questionable if it was necessary to do so. On a programme so varied it was difficult to get a solid majority for rejection, and a good many difficulties—another increase in the beer tax, for instance—had been privately smoothed over beforehand. To the programme succeeded the formal Budget and here the fight raged more seriously. The Populists objected to certain details in the incidence of the new taxation and withdrew the finance minister from the cabinet; the Socialists who had voted for more than one of the Budget proposals stood out for an increase in income tax. Again Bruening repeated his warning; the government regarded their proposals as urgently necessary to bring the national finances into order and would not either withdraw or modify them. Party passions were rising, and as they rose private negotiations became more difficult. The uncompromising tones of the chancellor made them impossible and, after a vain attempt to secure some sort of concession, the Socialists announced that they would not save the ministry. On the next division the government were defeated by 256 votes to 193, a few of Hugenberg's party refusing to follow their leader in voting against. Amid scenes of great excitement the Economic party brought in a motion to dissolve parliament; it was defeated. The Communists followed that up with a vote of no-confidence; it too was defeated. But the chancellor was in earnest. That the parties had no intention of driving him from office he knew; that a majority was possible after negotiation was evident from the events of that day; the fate of the Budget and the whole of the government programme was not really threatened. But he had to justify his own menaces. This was precisely the case which he and his friends had envisaged in the days when they were constructing a government. An essential part—essential, that is, in the eyes of the cabinet—of the government programme had been rejected. It had been agreed then that the challenge should be accepted the moment it was thrown down, in the belief that one lesson would be enough and that no more challenges would be issued.

In the light of that decision he acted. Next day the Reichstag learned that the measures they had rejected had been put into

force by presidential decree in virtue of the powers conferred upon the President by Article 48 of the Constitution. The act of decree could be disapproved by parliament and the Socialists promptly tabled a motion declaring it *ultra vires*. It was now that the weakness of the government was seen. They had indeed, or the chancellor and his intimates had, thought out precisely what they would do if the motion were carried. They had agreed not to resign; the only other course was a dissolution. And it was precisely a dissolution that they wanted to avoid, for it was clearer even than it had been a few weeks ago that the only victors would be the extremist parties. So, in spite of the bold acceptance of the challenge, the unhappy chancellor was forced to do all that an ordinary party leader would have done to avoid the defeat of the government. He sought to come to terms with Hugenberg, but that astute gentleman would have none of it. He saw no gain now in conciliating the Centrum and he was more reconciled than were individual members of his party to an extremist victory. Close in touch with every centre of political life and kept fully informed of the state of opinion by his agents, he was almost the only politician in Germany who correctly gauged the possible result of an election. But he was, alas, not the only politician in Germany who thought that victory makes extremists less extreme, and he was honestly convinced that Hitler at the head of a mass movement of millions would be easier prey than Hitler at the head of a small, carefully chosen party. He laid down conditions that the chancellor could not accept without surrendering entirely to a faction at deadly strife with important sections of his own coalition. The Socialists were obdurate; for them there was no possibility of withdrawal. In a campaign which would raise a dictatorship issue they did not dare let the leadership against dictatorship be filched by the Communists.

The Reichstag fully appreciated the significance of the debate which opened on July 18. Landsberg for the Socialists accused the government of violation of the constitution. Article 48, he declared, was there to be used only if the state were in jeopardy; it was not in jeopardy now. To show the solidarity of the Centrum, the most to the Left and the most staunchly republican

of all its leaders, Wirth, was put up to deliver what was on the whole an effective answer. Jeopardy was a word he did not like to use. He used instead the phrase "state of necessity." That such a state existed could not be denied. There was no possibility of securing a majority government and the government of the country must be carried on. If there was a state of permanent quarrel between government and parliament, if parliament claimed the right to rule and did not accept the responsibilities of rule then the parliamentary system was in a state of crisis. The opposition was making party mountains out of legislative molehills. Their own leader, the late chancellor, had before resigning toyed with the idea of government by decree; their great leader, the late President of the Republic, had governed by decree for weeks without anyone talking of a constitutional crisis, and the state of necessity then was actually not so serious as the state of necessity now with economic crisis upon them and bankruptcy staring them in the face, not because the nation was bankrupt of resources, but because the politicians were bankrupt of common sense. The Nationalist spokesman, speaking as was the Nationalist wont for the nation, declared that the nation refused to accept the burden of taxation laid upon it. He did not object to government by decree; it was against the content of the decree that his party would vote. The immediate result of this cynical contribution to the debate was a violent attack on Hugenberg by the generally respected Westarp, who insisted that the government policy ought to be given a trial and declined in the name of a large section of his party to vote against the ministry.

The vote was significant. The government were defeated only by fifteen votes (236 to 221), twenty-five Nationalists voting with them and five Nationalists abstaining. The moment the result was announced, before the excitement had time to die down, the chancellor read out a presidential decree dissolving parliament. The battle would now be carried to the country, and the nation, whom every single speaker had claimed as standing behind his party, would decide. "The summons now goes forth to the nation," ran the government manifesto on the dissolution "to decide its own destiny."

In spite of some of the attendant circumstances the result of the vote was really a victory for the government. If Bruening had not been all that he had hoped to be, he had handled a nasty situation more vigorously than any similar situation had been handled for a long time. He had shown the parties that he was not bluffing, that he had a good hand and that he intended playing it strongly to the end. His prestige undoubtedly now stood high; he had disappointed none of the hopes of his friends and disappointed many of the hopes of his opponents. And he had induced Hugenberg to smash the Nationalist party once again. There is no doubt that at that moment German parliamentarism had yet another chance of reforming itself by the creation of a really strong bourgeois coalition. To the actual government which was, as it were, the nucleus and the symbol of such a coalition—and there could not have been anything but a conservative coalition—there had been attracted all that was best in the parliamentary Nationalist party, and a largeish section of the Nationalist voters. It would not have been impossible to have arranged a basis of parliamentary union, for the bourgeois parties were now more than at any time in the history of the Republic inclined to be reasonable. They would have stoutly refused to lose their identity, but the dangers of the tendency of the class which they represented, on the one hand, to perpetual division and subdivision, and, on the other, to a stampede to extremism for lack of faith in the class leaders, had induced in all but the inveterate party official a mood very different to the fine old intransigence of earlier days. Before extremism the middle class, or its solidier elements, must necessarily coalesce. With the dramatic step of official Nationalism in 1927 and its acceptance of responsibility a perilous tradition had been broken, and the sequel had shown that the decision had been at once justified and approved. Actually between the possible coalition and the extremists there was nothing but a party rump, composed in the main of unimportant diehards and representatives of the piratical sections of capitalism and those extremists who could not stomach Hitler as leader of a great extremist party as opposed to an extremist movement. Such a coalition would have stood clearly for conservation, for law and

order, and, if it possessed the one real virtue of a coalition, cohesiveness, might well govern Germany, if it governed Germany well, for a generation. But no real effort was made to form such a coalition. It would have implied such a strengthening of the parliamentary system, of the democratic system, as would have been repugnant to the many possible members of it who looked to a certain supersession of that system; and even if that difficulty were got over by the fact of power remaining where, in the minds of "national" thinkers, power ought to remain, it was none the less true that a confessional party was an impossible basis for it. Once again the statement must be made that it was the existence of the Centrum as a confessional party which prevented German parliamentarism as established at Weimar from taking the only course that could have saved it as a system in the difficult period into which it was entering.

It was all too obvious that the policy of Bruening, using the word in the widest sense and not in that of an *ad hoc* programme, was not and could not be the policy of the Centrum, which could never afford to risk the chance of being driven into an opposition of any long duration. Bruening himself, indeed, had not risen to the conception of a great conservatively inclined coalition; at heart he was not sufficient of a democrat to devise a policy whose aim would have been to save democracy. He was content to devise a policy which would preserve ordered government of any kind, and by ordered government he meant government independent of the vagaries and changes of the parliamentary system. But the leaders of his party, and particularly local leaders, very properly conceived it their duty to look after the interests of their party and their confession. To those interests any permanent coalition seemed to be opposed. In view of the composition of their party the door to co-operation with any party, in the present instance the Socialists, must never be closed. They could close it temporarily in the Reich by opening it a little wider in Prussia and smooth over any unpleasantnesses by a quick change of leadership; if Treviranus and Schiele were the natural collaborators with Bruening, Mueller and Braun were the natural collaborators with Wirth. The essential condition of a permanent middle-

class coalition which might have achieved its end by being permanently in power was a clear statement of policy in favour of that particular coalition, and that meant the break-up of the Centrum-Socialist coalition in Prussia. That was precisely what the party managers of the Centrum were not prepared to do; its preservation was indeed essential to the unity of the party.

The result was that once again the dissolution meant nothing to the nation. It was indeed asked to approve the government's firmness by voting for the government parties, but there was no government appeal, no government campaign. Each party prepared for the battle as if there never had been and never could be such a thing as a coalition in Germany. In the end the electoral battle degenerated into a mere struggle to keep votes from the extremists, and the only point of interest was how many seats the extremists would get.

To both the Communists and the National Socialists the election was the opportunity for which they had long been clamouring. Both set themselves resolutely to gather in the floating vote. The Communists, still flushed with the success of 1928 and with the confirmation of that success at local elections, did not hope to make any great impression on the solid Socialist phalanx; their appeal was to the desperate elements of the middle class and to the new voter, particularly the young voter. The National Socialists, on the other hand, had unbounded opportunities. Not merely were they appealing to the middle class, but they were appealing against Hugenberg to the Nationalists with the claim that on all great issues they alone had represented steadily and uncompromisingly the "national" view; and if one accepted their definition of the "national" view the claim was easily justified. There was no attempt to gain the votes of the Left, no attempt to fight Communism. Recent elections had fully justified the policy of a dead set at the parties which also called themselves "national," and had shown Germany that what was taking place was a great attack on the middle-class parties, an attack which was none the less effective for not being concerted. In the Bavarian elections of 1928 the only gainers had been National Socialists, Socialists,

and Communists. In Thuringia, in December 1929, the Hitlerites had taken six seats from the Nationalists; only a few weeks before the Reich election they had won nine seats in Saxony from the Nationalists and the Populists. Both in Saxony and Thuringia the Left position remained intact. The collaboration in the initiative on the Young plan had been a glorious opportunity for propaganda, and the contemptible results of the agitation had been astutely used and successfully used to increase the prestige of the party. Furthermore, it had undergone a good many changes since it had won those thirteen seats two years and more before. It was now at once a movement and a party, Hitler's rather ingenious method of evading the obvious embarrassments attendant on the leader of a movement, which were confidently expected to ruin him by his "national" rivals. Over the movement he wielded almost unchallenged authority. Thanks to that sense of salesmanship, to his appreciation of the methods whereby a movement is created in the twentieth century, and to a propaganda technique which was rapidly approaching perfection he was able to exploit to the full the sufferings, physical and mental, of wide sections of the nation and their pathetic desire for a saviour. Many other would-be leaders in Germany possessed a far greater knowledge of Germany, a far deeper appreciation of the German character; no one in Germany had gauged with so uncanny a precision and so contemptuously the state of mind of a majority of Germans. In circumstances which could hardly have been more favourable for his methods, he had succeeded in creating a movement whose creed could be fairly summed up in the single phrase "trust the Leader." It was a personal movement, a movement of which the fanaticism always latent in a movement would be directed towards his person, a movement which did not care for programmes or policies, but listened eagerly to denunciation, in touching confidence that one who could denounce so shrewdly and so unrestrainedly could also create and cure. Hitler's accomplishment between the years 1929 and 1932 leaves the Church of Christ, Scientist, an affair of bungling amateurs, and Hitler had no Christ to appeal to as the ultimate source of power and achievement.

With his party he had not been so successful despite the fact that he possessed the qualities of the leader of a gang in quite as high a degree as those of the leader of a modern movement. There were not a few members of the gang who took the programme very seriously, much more seriously than Hitler, whose contempt for the written word—despite the verbosity of *Mein Kampf*—approaches monomania; and the Leader had a difficult course to steer between those who believed in revolution and to whom the catchwords and emblems of the movement were as essential as the Palladium and as worthy of veneration as the Graal, and those who like himself saw nothing essential but success and venerated nothing except power.

The official party, now approaching the two hundred thousand mark, was still in a state of disunity; it had achieved neither common aims nor a common dogma, and to a very great extent Hitler had not been able to achieve discipline. His most awkward colleagues were the survivors of the "Freikorps" who persisted each in running his own district according to his own ideas and often in opposition to the central authority. Once the decision had been taken to add a movement to the party, a big corps of organizers and leaders was necessary, much bigger than the limited resources of headquarters could supply. Hitler had been forced, therefore, to accept as local leaders the chiefs of local associations and local parties who had no mind to sink either their ambitions or their views in the National Socialist party and who were all, even if only in a local sense, rivals for power. Between 1928 and 1930 there had been a series of crises, ending invariably in the expulsion or submission of the rebels, and with the expulsion or reduction to subordinate rank of the majority of the ex-officers who had founded patriotic associations in succession to the "Freikorps." The worst battle had been in Berlin where the local association had thrown off all allegiance and been reduced to submission only at the cost of serious loss in membership, which, however, was soon restored and increased by the efforts of Josef Goebbels who as leader for Berlin not only succeeded in creating a strong local party but in establishing himself in a position of such power in the national party as involved the exercise of a

good deal of tactful flattery to prevent the hostility of the eternally suspicious Leader.

In the end a degree of unity had been achieved that many of the faithful had believed impossible, and the intrigues that still harassed the leadership were palace much more than party intrigues. The ambitious were still with it, but the independent had been largely got rid of. In 1930 Hitler had no actually dangerous rival and he counted on his own astuteness to ruin the hopes of any of the many potential rivals. The old party programme—the “unalterable document”—still remained the official programme, but dogmatically the leadership and the party was in a state of complete confusion. In an election in which the party was on the offensive that mattered very little, and without troubling to reconcile all the different views on what constituted revolution the party went into the fight as a definitely revolutionary party with a revolutionary dictatorship as its aim, and with the more fervour as the leadership knew well that it had no chance of victory in the absolute sense.

The real significance of the National Socialist appeal was in its insistence that it, and it alone, represented the “national” cause. It was a non-class party while the Nationalist party was essentially a class party. It stood for the restoration of Germany and the repudiation of the Young Plan and the Versailles Treaty, whereas the Nationalist party had accepted the latter and in its majority was supporting loyal acceptance of the former. The clever linking of revolutionism and nationalism, the appeal to “the plain man who hates politicians,” and to the young who were conscious in their minority of intellectual frustration and in their great majority of economic helplessness, the Messianic fervour with which the salvationist mission of the Leader was preached, the cumulative effect of eighteen months’ furious propaganda ably conducted with its electoral evidence of steady success—all these worked powerfully on the electorate and flung the older parties back on the defensive. As the campaign developed the hopes of the party and also the apprehensions of the Leader rose ever higher. At the dissolution their opponents—Hugenberg and his information bureau excepted—admitted that the National Socialists would

double their representation; the party experts and the propaganda agent in chief Goebbels hoped for fifty seats; as the fight progressed eighty appeared to be not too optimistic a forecast; the final result gave them one hundred and seven seats—the most startling and unexpected electoral success won under the Republic.

As it surveyed the final figures, the government had as little difficulty in appreciating the extent and significance of its defeat as it had in minimizing it. Judgment depended entirely on what figures one used and how one used them. Thanks to the mathematically perfect electoral system, even with an exceedingly heavy poll the relative strengths of parties and combinations had with that one exception not greatly altered. Eighty-two per cent of the electors voted. Of the total poll the percentage of the Left parties was 4 less than their percentage at the last election (Socialists down 6·3 per cent; Communists up 2·3 per cent). The Left poll was up by half a million and was still 37·2 per cent of the total. They had 143 and 77 seats respectively in a house of 577 members. The Centrist-Bavarian poll was equally up, their percentage slightly down and they had increased the number of their seats to 68 and 19. The Democrats with 20, the Populists with 30 seats had suffered heavy loss; the Economic party had held its 23 seats. But the total poll of these three parties had fallen on an increased poll by nearly a million and a half, a very serious loss. On the Right, what had been the proud Nationalist party of old had gone into the fight in no fewer than nine parties. Thanks to his organizing genius Hugenberg had consolidated his position and came back at the head of a compact little party of forty-one, having actually improved on the position he had occupied just before the dissolution and done considerably better than either the rebel parties or the government had expected him to do.

So far the results were normal and could have been prophesied by any close student of the electoral changes since 1919. But all calculations were upset by the astounding rise of the National Socialist poll from 810,000 to 6,401,000 to let it become the second largest party in parliament. The total poll had risen by over four and a quarter million. The defeat of the middle-class parties was therefore far greater than the figures at first suggested.

They had not only completely failed to attract the new voter, but they had in two years lost over a fifth of their old party voters. On the figures it was obvious that of these two classes the very great majority had voted for Hitler.

The significance of his victory lay in the fact that he had brought out to the poll so many who had not yet voted before, and a leader who can do that is, from the point of view of the realist party leader, a rival with whom one must very seriously reckon. From that point of view it was immaterial whether or no so overwhelming a success was an embarrassment as much as a matter for excited self-congratulation. That success meant that the appeal for unity, which, as far as the government, if not the President, was concerned, was an appeal for middle-class unity, had failed entirely in favour of an appeal to revolutionary action. So long as that appeal was made and answered, even if the initial answer had, relatively speaking, been feeble and impressive only in contrast to the utter failure of the government's appeal, so long as the National Socialist party maintained its attitude of frenzied opposition to the state, to the national government, to the national parliament, and to the national policy no middle-class coalition even of the loosest type was possible. Except at the cost of humiliating concessions such as his own attitude had made impossible Bruening had to choose between resigning and fighting with the support of the President against a parliamentary majority. On the figures no majority was possible. Even with the support of all the bourgeois parties the government could count on less than 200 votes. It was dependent for its parliamentary life on the votes of the Socialists.

But to the casuists of the Centrum the situation did not appear desperate. To them, Hitler whom they did not know, was preferable to Hugenberg whom they knew only too well, and with whom the cabinet's personal feud was particularly bitter. They appreciated the significance neither of Hitler nor of his party. They did not want to appreciate it. With calm cynicism they reflected that every party leader has his price and that the immediate aim of policy was to find out what that price was. They did not believe in a Hitlerite revolution and still less in the threats of it made

on platform after platform during the election, against which the sources of the party funds seemed to speak in shriller tones than those even of Josef Goebbels. In other words, they had not yet grasped with the history of twenty centuries of Christianity behind them the difference between a party and movement. Like so many otherwise shrewd observers since, they saw only Hitler and were blind to National Socialism.

The fact that the cabinet was in a worse minority than ever did not therefore trouble them. The majority against it, if bigger, was in their opinion the more easily divisible, and on the figures there was no majority against the *system* of government by decree. On the content of the decrees, if more were necessary, there was ample room for old-fashioned bargaining. To Bruening indeed there was indeed no question of creating a system; to him the issuance of a decree was then not an integral part of a policy but a threat whose success depended on the degree to which it impressed opponents. He believed, not without justification, that the rapidity and decision of action which he had shown a month ago had made an impression, and that once the Reichstag had grasped the fact that he was in earnest it would not be so unwilling as might be expected to provide the government measures with a majority. He and his colleagues went to meet the new deputies with an equanimity that was not assumed, but was the result of long dealings with men and healthy scepticism regarding the object of Hitler's trembling adoration, the spoken word.

CHAPTER VIII

THE "INTERVENTION OF THE HERRENKLUB" AND THE FALL OF BRUENING

THE Reichstag met on October 15 in what was, taking all the circumstances into consideration, remarkably good heart. The new strengths of the parties opened up alluring prospects of negotiation to the committees and to the chancellor of holding even more strongly to power, now that the extremist parties by holding one-third of the seats would produce at least pressure inwards. His speech in defence of a "crisis" policy was polite enough but defiant. He had already rejected the tentative efforts made from the Left to form another Great Coalition and from the Right to broaden the basis of his cabinet by including "national" representatives. He could afford to reject both, but the latter rather than the former. Hitler was in one of his exalted moods when he forgot whence the revenues of the party came and was allowing the fieriest of his lieutenants to develop at their will his message after the results of the election had been announced: "After victory tie the helmet on tighter." In press and on the platform these lieutenants delivered themselves of a furious attack on the Hugenbergites, a party of "social reaction" as opposed to the National Socialist party of "social revolution," and on the corrupt bourgeoisie. The party was out to capture the nation—all except the Marxists—and would have neither compromise nor alliance with anybody. In the Reichstag Gregor Strasser delivered himself of a general attack not merely on the ministry, in which a series of bitter characterizations raised a storm of protest and counter-cheering, but on the whole policy of the Republic from the Versailles Treaty onwards, whose rejection he demanded. National Socialism, he cried, would roughly but honourably push through its own conception of the state; it did not want war but, if war was the only way in which to win back German freedom, it would not shrink from it, and he finally subsided exhausted on being called to order for an accusation of high treason against Groener,

amid the approving yells and desk-banging of his own party—and of the Communists. The whole session was marked by scenes and disorder, but with the announcement of the Socialist decision to support the government the issue was settled. The government majority on a direct vote of confidence was thirty-five.

But nothing now could conceal the magnitude of the crisis that faced Germany as it faced the world. Happily it is not necessary to go into detail on the desperate struggle that went on universally in 1931, a struggle of which the full story has not yet been told and which considering the panic into which even the stoutest-hearted fell will probably never be told; men who have got to the extent of being hardly responsible for their actions are hardly likely to end by writing responsibly about them, and amid floods of reports and contradictory statistics, the views of economists who are held to be scientific and the exhortations of politicians who are held to be the reverse, masses of legislation and almost greater masses of wildcat criticism and suggestion, the political student feebly endeavours to keep his head above water. These were the days of conference after conference—wheat conferences, tariff truce conferences, reparations and debts conferences, disarmament conferences—exchanges of diplomatic visits and the desperate endeavour of governments to raise money—real money—in a world overflowing with riches, days in which the grotesque bulks nearly as largely as the tragic.

In Germany as elsewhere the government was driven from one extreme to another as national panic grew, and now was seen the appalling result of the failure of the politicians to accept the challenge given by the national optimism in 1927. The economic experts shed tears in every capital over Germany's lack of financial reserves; what were also lacking were moral reserves. The neglect of 1927-1928 to give the republican regime the proper economic and financial bases which would have enabled the nation at least to meet crisis with dignity left the system helpless. It simply went to pieces and the national *morale* with it. The government worked heroically; its printing presses were kept nearly as busy with decrees and regulations as they had been printing banknotes in the days of inflation, and every decree was just too late. At no

time did it ever succeed in getting ahead of the crisis; its legislation was out of date by the time it was in force and the remedies which it applied ruthlessly now were of no effect. The parable of the foolish virgins had its moral driven home with a force that no one should have mistaken but, unlike the foolish virgins who at least bemoaned their error, the politicians went on indignantly hoping in a hopeless world.

Fortunately there is no need to go into detail on the actual events and a brief summary will suffice. The Reichstag met again on February 3. The Right was in truculent mood; Hugenberg, conscious of steady loss of ground in the country, clamoured for another dissolution; the government was pursuing simply a Centrist policy and, when the Centrist chancellor strove to reply, the Communists and Hitlerites shouted him down. To avert further disorder and obstructionism, the government tabled a bill amending the Reichstag procedure which the Right opposition declared was a breach of the constitution; defence of the constitution was now their trump card. The government was firm, and the Right opposition seeing that desk-banging would not affect the result formed into procession and walked out of the House. The procedure bill was passed by three hundred votes to nil. The honest Westarp declared that Nationalism, the proudest of the parties, was now the mere hireling of a revolutionary mob-party.

The exit of the Right placed the government in a difficulty for the Socialists were now in a key position; they had only to unite their votes to those of the Communists to defeat the ministry. They indeed voted against the Communist vote of no-confidence, but they used their position to try to amend the government measures. They moved to create a special 10 per cent tax on incomes of over 20,000 marks per annum, and the government was saved only by the action of the Reichsrat in rejecting it. But Bruening needed not have worried overmuch; the Socialist party had condemned itself to impotence in advance. When on March 19 Groener defending the appropriation for the second new cruiser declared that, if it were rejected, he would resign, the Socialists abstained from voting although nine of them went into the lobbies

with the Communists, and the Reichstag dismissed itself until October. Two months later the unemployment figures touched the four million mark.

Meantime into a distracted foreign political situation Curtius had thrown a sudden bomb. On that very March 19 when the fate of the ministry was in the balance, it was announced that Germany and Austria had agreed to form a Customs union. There is no reason to believe that there was anything very sinister behind the move. Austria's financial plight, despite the League of Nations, was even more desperate than Germany's and a customs union had much to recommend it as an economic measure. But it was folly to have turned it, as Curtius did, into a sensational announcement at a time when France finding herself isolated in all the discussions that were going on would welcome an anti-German diversion. The end of it all was a crushing humiliation for the German government. Three days later came a joint protest in Vienna by France, Czechoslovakia, and—Italy on whose support Germany was counting in her reparations fight. The platonic approval of the Labour government in Britain was no support, and within three days of a proud announcement of Germany's political independence it was clear that she was going to be proved more dependent than ever. The net result was a fierce opposition by France to the desperate appeals to the Allied powers to let Germany declare a moratorium on reparations payment which would have had at least a heartening effect on the nation driven almost to frenzy by the allegations that Germans were being taxed into starvation to swell the coffers of Allied capitalism. Behind the scenes negotiations grew ever more complicated. A visit to London by Bruening and Curtius, who were received by King George, was taken by France as a manifesto of Anglo-German conspiracy against French interests, and in face of all the evidence France announced herself completely sceptical regarding both Germany's inability to pay or the extent of her national distress. Her politicians failed to see that it was no longer a question of economic ability to pay; it was one of political impossibility to pay. Eventually a typical way out was found. The rôle of saviour was assigned to America, then frantically endeavouring at once

to save herself from chaos and the Republican "party of prosperity" from rout. Hindenburg addressed a letter of pathetic and dignified appeal to President Hoover, and the latter on June 21 announced a general debt moratorium. That transferred the quarrel to financial detail; what debts precisely would the moratorium cover? In July Luther, the successor of Schacht—now a full-fledged National Socialist, went a round trip to get credits without success. Some days later Bruening and Curtius appeared in Paris and the French announced that as a result of the figures placed before them they had been "impressed." A debts conference opened on July 20 in London while MacDonald and Henderson returned Bruening's visit in Berlin. The words of the present British Prime Minister are worth recalling: "Our confidence in Germany remains unaltered. . . . A *free* and self-respecting Germany is indispensable for the community of civilization." They were said nearly two years too soon. A few days before the American Secretary of State had also been in Berlin expressing his admiration for Germany, and on August 17 Bruening and Curtius visited Rome. Four days later the London conference reported on the Hoover proposal; their reports, particularly Layton's, are admirable documents, much of which will no doubt be incorporated into all future textbooks of international economics, and will stand as an example of touching faith in the chances of economic legislation solving political problems.

The accompaniment to all this sterile political peregrination and economic lecturing was political action which did have effect. While the French deputies were making the Chamber echo with denunciations of German perfidy on every issue the French Foreign Office, made perfect by practice going back a couple of generations, had used golden bullets with deadly effect. On May 13 a startled world learned that the greatest Austrian bank, the Creditanstalt, had shut its doors. It was not merely a bank; it was a huge industrial organization participated in by nearly 70 per cent of Austria's industry and with ramifications across the frontiers. There was instant panic and nowhere was the panic greater than in Germany. The Reichsbank shot the discount rate up from 2 to 8 per cent; its president swore by all his gods there

would be no inflation; the government passed a series of precautionary measures; American finance intervened with Hoover to provoke the moratorium plan. But it was no use. Public confidence had gone, and on July 13 the great Darmstaedter und Nationalbank—the Danat—had to shut its doors because it could not pay frantic queues of depositors. It is no exaggeration to say that for a day or two Germany, merely for lack of money tokens which represented real value, was on the edge of collapse, and was only saved because the great international financial interests realizing the infectious nature of panic hastily came to the rescue. In a week this particular crisis was over, although the nation never got over the shock. But the real aim of the French manoeuvres had been attained; France had for the moment control of Austria. The diplomatic war over the Customs union had been temporarily suspended on a British suggestion that the Hague Court be asked to give a legal opinion whether the union was in fact a violation of the Treaty settlement. The Court took a long time and it had not yet given its decision when the League Assembly met in September. It was doubtful what its verdict would be and the French took no risks. On September 3 the Austrian chancellor announced that the whole plan had been dropped and vaguely hinted that the dropping was an altruistic piece of sacrifice to make general tariff measures more possible. Two days later the Court reported by a majority of two against the union, thanks to the votes of South American judges. The voting had gone on purely political lines and the legal arguments remain an interesting monument of special pleading.

But it was a terrible diplomatic reverse and humiliation to Germany, and her impotence to conduct even the shadow of an independent foreign policy was exposed to the world. There was not even the possibility of an "as if" policy; if the dead follow the further flutterings of the living, Stresemann must have writhed at the skilllessness of the hands into which a great foreign policy had fallen, for the whole business had been conducted with a clumsiness that baffles description. The foreign minister was doomed. It was not really his fault. He had never dominated the Foreign Office as his predecessor had done, and the conduct of

foreign policy had fallen into the hands of officials who had learned nothing since the days when their cleverness had landed them in a world war which was the last thing they wanted. Once again they had committed their favourite fault of risking everything, including the reputation of the foreign minister, to win a success of prestige. Had the world not been in crisis, they might well have had war once again on their hands, but the world was in crisis and they only experienced a political defeat of the first magnitude.

The humiliation had, as will be seen, more serious repercussions than all the economic difficulties, and it was plain that the government would have its work cut out to avert its fall. This was the sort of position in which Brüning showed at his best. He reassured himself of the President's support and refused to let Curtius resign. On September 27 he even scored a success by inducing the French, rendered complacent by success, to pay an official return visit to Berlin. Briand and his prime minister Laval reached Berlin two days after the unemployment figures had reached four and a half million, and there was the exquisite comedy of a love feast. The net results were not very great, but what the visitors saw began to make an impression. They did not care very much whether Germany collapsed or not, but they did see the dangers of a Germany in despair, and they also saw the possibilities of deriving profit from kindness. A week before Britain had thrown her own bombshell into the situation by going off the gold standard after having formed a national coalition to maintain it. It was a direct threat to the position of the gold standard countries and what common sense had failed to do was accomplished by financial interest; there was what was described perhaps a little too enthusiastically as a Franco-German *rapprochement*. There was even an atmosphere created for the one thing that the chancellor wanted—repudiation in some form or another of the Young plan—but his financial colleagues were less fortunate; there was no hope of French credits. It is true they could have been had on terms, but the terms—an Eastern Locarno and the renunciation of the Corridor and Silesia—were too high. After the Austrian fiasco no chancellor could have faced parliament

with another renunciation, and one that so closely touched the hearts of a people profoundly stirred by very recent outrages on the German minority in Poland, outrages of that peculiarly uncivilized character which no doubt made the Hitlerite regime in 1933 feel itself the natural ally of Pilsudski.

But none the less a political success had been achieved and in November the German government was able to declare officially that, in spite of taxes and economies, it was not in a position to think of paying reparations and to ask what the Young plan powers proposed to do in the matter. When it referred to taxes and economies it was referring modestly enough to a whole series of decrees and regulations which, in addition to protecting the mark and other purely financial interests, were not merely alienating the political friends of the ministry but were driving large sections of the nation to despair. There is no need to enumerate them here. It is enough to say that they had a threefold effect. They reduced the salaries of officials, made drastic cuts in what may be called government overheads and in social service expenditure while giving subsidies to interests, particularly agriculture, in distress; they drastically increased many tariffs particularly, again to help agriculture, on certain classes of foodstuffs, and they even more drastically increased direct and indirect taxation. They were all in themselves excellent had they come in time; unfortunately each successive instalment of them was simultaneous with a further fall in government income, a further fall in production, and a further rise in unemployment. They formed the economic scenery to the political drama to which if the reader will keep some of the above dates in mind we can now turn to watch the parties and personalities begin to take their places for the grand finale of 1933.

The theatrical exodus of the Right parties from the Reichstag cleared up the parliamentary situation for the few days before the deputies voted themselves a vacation, but it was very far from clearing up the situation as between the parties. It did not even, as the anti-Hugenberg Nationalists carefully but sorrowfully pointed out, clear up the situation of the Right parties. Hitlerism was now at a particularly interesting stage. Not very long before

the elections the National Socialist leadership had been convulsed by a minor crisis. The decision to be "parliamentary" involved the necessity of being a mass-party, and the mass-party was being gathered by means of a revolutionary programme, or rather by means of revolutionary slogans, in which the word "liberty" was used as an ideal and the word "Capitalist" as a term of abuse almost equivalent in its viciousness to "Marxist." The slogans were not just slogans; they represented the views, the considered—if one may use the word—views, of a good number of the hierarchy and a very considerable number of the rank and file, particularly perhaps the more recent comers; they did not represent Hitler's considered view as party treasurer. Of the revolutionary wing in whose view a definite change in social organization and the elimination of Socialism and Capitalism alike were necessary, the outstanding figures were Gregor Strasser and his brother Otto. Gregor was the abler, a born politician with perhaps even the makings of a statesman in him; Otto was the simpler, and the more enthusiastic. Both were sincere, but in Otto's sincerity there was more passion and less ambition. It was due mainly to Gregor's efforts that the party strength had doubled in nine months and by March 1930 had had officially over 200,000 enrolled members. The success aroused the ever-suspicious Leader. It was suggested to him that Strasser's was the "policy of catastrophe," a rather meaningless phrase which none the less alarmed Hitler, who had bitter experience of catastrophes and thought they were the same thing as "putsches." There had already been one partial crisis over the relations with the "bourgeois" parties and in January 1930 Hitler had provoked another. The result of the election in Thuringia put the Right in the position to form a cabinet. Should the National Socialists enter it? The spear-point of the opposition which was swelled by many of the fiery "putschists" whom Hitler so feared in every sense were the Strassers. That was sufficient for the anti-Strasser wing and for Hitler. Goebbels who, without a tithe of Strasser's brains, had appointed himself supreme publicity agent for the movement, indicated the enormous value from his point of view of having a propaganda agent actually in a cabinet. Hitler decided for

participation, but characteristically enough instructed Frick—an arid lawyer of proved loyalty, some sense of reality, and not unintelligent—to enter the Thuringian cabinet as minister of education and do his best not to convince the nation of the responsibility of National Socialists, but to go ahead with a “policy of catastrophe,” that is so to muddle things up that of chaos National Socialism would reap the advantage. In parenthesis it may be remarked that Frick did his best to obey instructions by using his position to turn every school and educational agency into an instrument of propaganda, by installing a discredited anthropologist in Jena University, and by writing National Socialist prayers for school use, and so successfully that he drew upon himself the attention of the central government and was finally got rid of by his revolted bourgeois colleagues. But what looked like surrender of the revolutionary position of no power but all power drove the passionate Otto to despair and he broke out into open revolt. In a furious debate he extracted from the Leader what the latter meant by Socialism and found that he considered Socialism definitely a bad thing. Nothing in fact was to be done against private enterprise so long as it did nothing definitely contrary to the interests of the nation. He was not a Socialist, but a corporative Fascist. In despair Otto Strasser left the party. Gregor, not yet despairing and hoping still to convince the Leader, remained. The elections justified him and the Leader became nearly as revolutionary as his lieutenant. In Bremen not long afterwards the party doubled its general election vote—at the expense of the bourgeois—and Strasser’s Reichstag speech seemed to set the seal on the movement as definitely social revolutionary. This was too much for the paymasters; they uttered a warning and from higher quarters still came a warning not only against Strasser and his policy of catastrophe, but against any thought of illegality. It became necessary to make the position clear.

Shortly after the elections there opened at Leipzig the trial of three young Reichswehr officers of the Ulm garrison who had become National Socialists on a charge of attempting to “corrupt” the Reichswehr. Influential circles had tried to hush the matter up, but the Ministry of Defence insisted on the accused being

brought to trial. Hitler, summoned as witness, was clever enough to shift the issue from one of the legality of tampering with the forces of the state to one of whether or not he and his movement were acting "legally." Under oath as a witness he declared that he would reach power only by constitutional means; there was no need to use other means for two or three elections more would give the party 51 per cent of the votes. Counsel was sceptical and as they tried, by judicious quoting of party literature which Hitler declared unofficial, to lure him into damaging admissions, the Leader, never difficult to flurry, lost his temper and declared again that only constitutional means would be used, but, when they had been used to effect, a National Socialist government would set up a revolutionary tribunal and "the heads of the November traitors would roll"—a phrase that was greeted with angry cries, laughter, and applause.

The paymasters were satisfied; they had feared that the "extremists"—even in the extremest of parties there are extremists—had succeeded in winning him over definitely and now their fears were allayed; they would risk the tribunal. But in the party there was considerable dismay. It was not Strasser who was upset for he knew that if the "policy of catastrophe" succeeded no one would trouble a whit about the constitution. But the "putschists" were taken sadly aback. A section of the Storm Troop leaders resolved to strike for freedom under Stennes, the head of the Storm Troopers for the whole of Eastern Germany. Before he could do anything Hitler, warned beforehand, expelled him. Goebbels, who was deep in the plot, got out of it just in time, and the whole incident was a striking party triumph for Hitler. The rebels appealed to the party, but not a man of the rank and file responded. Whatever might be said of the officers the army was true to the Leader.

Once again revolution was in the air as the government began to take measures against the disturbance of public order. No fewer than three decrees gravely curtailing the right of assembly and the freedom of the press brought joint protests from the Communists and National Socialists; the protests were not just academic, for the party began to find its papers being suppressed and its propa-

ganda interfered with especially in Prussia. While the propagandists freely sided with the "Marxists," the party dignifiedly associated itself with the Right opposition in regretting that the President should have so far departed from his constitutional non-party position as to sign unconstitutional decrees. Meantime, despite their antagonism in the constituencies the Right parties, thanks to the paymaster peacemakers, had begun to come together again. In Prussia, where the parliament, still dominated by the Weimar coalition, had steadfastly refused to dissolve, the fight particularly bitter, and in February 1931 the National Socialists demanded recourse to the initiative on a dissolution motion. The Nationalists at once supported them and the combined parties had an easy victory at the polls. In April the subsequent motion was duly rejected by parliament and went to a referendum where it was lost, but the opposition had collected 37 per cent of the votes; the Prussian coalition had no particular reason to feel easy about its victory. The fight brought the two party leaderships closer and as the political situation worsened consultations multiplied.

The resignation of Curtius on October 3 made the opposition feel that its time was nearing, but it was speedily undeceived. Bruening had retained the unfortunate tool of Foreign Office cleverness only so long as would enable him to show the critics that he was master of the situation and that it took more than one mistake to bring down the cabinet. But he realized, and Curtius could not but agree with him, that the latter's position was untenable. Of all the parties his own, the Populists, had taken the Austrian failure most hardly and their support of the government was considerably in doubt. Curtius therefore was allowed to resign to give the chancellor freedom to "broaden the basis" of his cabinet, and two days later the chancellor having tendered a formal resignation of the cabinet to the President was commissioned to do so. There were really no negotiations. To such a pass was Germany reduced that there was no one to whom the Foreign Office could be entrusted, and the chancellor, committing the same fault—politicians never seem to have the faculty granted to the wise of learning from other people's experience; they have all the scientist's wasteful lust for personal experiment

—as MacDonald had committed in this country in 1923–1924, took over that office in addition to the chancellorship. The only other absentee was Wirth, a notable departure for a not unnotable reason.

The fact that the cabinet crisis had really not been a crisis, that a reshuffle had taken only two days disagreeably disappointed the Right, but they were encouraged by the news that so far from the basis being broadened, it was contracting. The Populist executive, aggrieved by the loss of a ministry and claiming to regard the dropping of Curtius as an affront, had resolved to go into opposition. They did not carry the whole party with them for there were still some distinguished members who had not forgotten all Stresemann's teaching and saw the dire necessity of maintaining the bourgeois block, but the cabinet could now be certain that they would have to face the possible loss of thirty votes and might be almost certain that they would lose the votes of the Economic party as well. The omens seemed favourable for a defeat of the government and the Right parties agreed to join forces. A great demonstration at Harzburg (October 11) attended by Hugenberg, Hitler, Seldte, high officials of the Pan-German League and kindred associations, and an unexpected addition to that galley, Seeckt, officially announced the creation of the "National Front." From Hugenberg's point of view it was high time. It was the only possible chance and a slender one of avoiding disaster. In September the elections at Hamburg had resulted in another startling National Socialist victory. They raised their representation from three seats to forty-three, and reduced the Populists from twenty to seven and the Nationalists from twenty-two to nine. The process had only one logical end.

The "National Front" carefully avoided a programme; it stood for the "national" demand for the resignation of the Reich and the Prussian cabinets and in its manifesto to the nation it raised the bloody spectre of civil war:

In the coming unrest we declare that in the coming troubles we shall defend the life, property, home, and position of all those who with us publicly acknowledge the nation; we refuse to protect the actual government and the reigning system with our blood.

The declaration has been explained away, but there is really no argument against those who hold that it was the announcement of civil war. It was Hitler's answer to the critics in his party who again deplored compromise with the bourgeois. Frick the legalist and historian explained that there was really no compromise. Contemporary history showed them the example of Mussolini who used the bourgeois for his own ends and tricked them not with the promise but with the actuality of a coalition. This was only a promise. It was cold comfort for Hugenberg or would have been had he not been surer of his ground than even Hitler knew.

Meantime on the Left embarrassment was succeeding embarrassment. The Socialist leadership was facing up to its last dilemma; behind them the trade unions were growling into revolt and for the first time the drift of the younger elements to Communism began to cause serious alarm. A united Left front was out of the question. There were only two alternatives; to support the government or to outbid the Communists. The latter was impossible for the leadership; the former was therefore inevitable. But the theory of inevitability was not shared by the ordinary party member and the revolt of the nine in March was a warning that could not be neglected. The ban on meetings and on the press and the attempt to interfere with illegal forces hit the Socialists no less, if less obviously, than the extremists. Their own press was by no means tender to the government; their own meetings were by no means unseditious from the official point of view and the Reichsbanner of which they had now secured control and were seeking—or rather enthusiastic individuals were seeking—to turn into a Socialist force of defence for the constitution might just as easily come under the ban as the Red Fighting Front or the Storm Troopers. If the new "Iron Front" were assailed they could hardly abandon it; with nearly a million organized "troops" at the disposal of the extremists and the steady declaration of Reichswehr leaders that the national forces were non-political, they could hardly leave themselves defenceless.

The government decrees, too, were now bearing ever more hardly on the working class. While very considerable sums were

being in theory devoted to the subsidy of agriculture and in practice going very largely into the hands of the great landowners—the notorious Help for the East (*Osthilfe*)—the prices of food-stuffs in the interest of the said landowners were rising as a result of tariffs. The landed interests were clamouring for autarchy, that is, the cessation of imports. It was true it was only agricultural imports at the moment, but phrases like “autarchic existence” had their appeal and it was very doubtful how far even a student of economics like the chancellor would be able to resist it. It is true that remembering his textbooks he said plaintively that a favourable trade balance was essential, but he also said—a little later when the British attack on the gold standard had thrown the German export trade into a confusion that the general heightening of tariffs was to complete: “If they will not take our goods they cannot expect reparations.” A sudden reversal of trading policy such as would have plunged the working class into complete distress was therefore not outside the bounds of possibility. The distress already existing was making serious inroads into the union funds and the offensive against wages had already begun. Government spokesmen had proclaimed wages reductions to be as inevitable as salaries reductions; they would have none of the alternative solution, a reduction in hours, and the average trade unionist was strongly suspicious of the determination with which his leaders would fight if the wages offensive developed.

It was, therefore, in an atmosphere of gloom that the Socialist party had held its conference in May. The view of the leader was quite honestly expressed by both Mueller and his only rival at the moment for leadership, Breitscheid. They did not defend the government; that was hardly possible before a Socialist audience; but they held that toleration of it was a sad necessity. It was better to endure the evil that one knew than risk the unknown, a Nationalist-National Socialist coalition. “We must keep Bruening alive so long as he is determined to resist Fascism.” The phrase was a striking one and the eloquence of the speakers, particularly Breitscheid’s, carried the day in favour of the “policy of the lesser evil.” The conference enthusiastically endorsed it and solemnly recalled the errant nine to the duties of a disciplined party man.

It is rather difficult to see precisely about what the rank and file were enthusiastic, and it is difficult even now to explain the attitude of the leadership. What they said was obvious; it was obvious to any one as a possible policy, but their defence of it as the right and the best policy was feeble in the extreme. It was not really the policy of the lesser evil; it was the policy of hoping against hope. The success of it as a party success depended on a double gamble, first that Bruening held the same view of the "national" opposition as the party did and that the Socialist aid could keep him in power. If he suddenly came to terms with Hugenberg-Hitler or if he were driven from office where then would the Socialist party be? The chances were that it would not only be helpless in the midst of enemies, but that all and not just a few of its fighting elements would go over to Communism, for, strange as it may seem and strange as it did seem to the leadership, there were very many Socialists who honestly believed that if it came to civil war the Communists would fight. The crux of the matter was just how sincere the leadership was in its expressed fear of Fascism, and that is a question to which there is no answer. But if it was sincere the leadership can hardly have failed to recognize that the only barrier against its triumph was a strong Socialist party. It was not for the moment a question of strikes or barricades; it was a question of *morale*. There was no other way to heighten *morale* than by giving evidence of willingness to lead now in anticipation and cheerful acceptance of the sterner fight that was to come. For a fighting party a policy of "toleration" is in fact intolerable; one might as well try to work up the enthusiasm of a child for a sucked orange. The situation was far too serious, if the leaders' own accounts of it were accurate, for a lecture on tactics. If ultimately, and that is what a sincerity of belief in the danger of Fascism meant, compromise would have to be abandoned as a policy as a result of the initiative of the enemy, the sooner it was abandoned by their own initiative the better. To the present writer it seems, possibly wrongly but at least on general principles, that there was only one course open and that was to break with the government. That did not mean to make one of these theatrical declara-

tions of intentions so dear to German party leadership. It meant support of the government until a definite issue arose when the interests of the workers and the interests of the country were in direct opposition to government action. Whatever the leaders said it would have to come to that in the end; strategy is the art of anticipation and a strategist who was more than a tactician would have seen that it was of inestimable advantage to choose one's own time for action and not have it chosen for one. That is not to say the final result would have been different. Bazaine would probably have been defeated anyway, but that is no defence at all of the intellectual and moral blunder of going back into Metz which made defeat certain. But retiring into Metz was nearly as persistent a habit with the Socialists as going to Canossa was to Hitler.

But there were two things that were more decisive than tactics. The one was the creeping paralysis that had been so long rife among German politicians and made inaction or negative action always seem preferable to positive action; and the second was that equally paralysing but much nobler sense of responsibility to the nation. The decision to let the government be beaten or to defeat it might provoke a situation where fighting would be unavoidable, and anything, even the ruin of the country, was better than a civil strife in which German slew German in the streets and the *tertiū gaudentes* hoisted a Red flag over heaps of corpses. The truth was that the Socialist leadership hated Fascism but feared Bolshevism.

That the decision was welcome to Bruening is undoubted; it strengthened his parliamentary position but in the end it was a factor, as the Socialist leadership ought to have seen when they sought to save him, in his destruction. For the moment it enabled him to meet the Reichstag in October in good heart and in sententious mood. But under the sententiousness there was defiance. Nothing he said would have pleased him more had it been possible to form a government from all those parties with a sense of responsibility, but the parties preferred to rend themselves to pieces rather than to perform their simple duty to their country. Therefore he had now the honour to present a government which was

more independent of the parties than ever. He turned to other nations less in anger at their refusal to help Germany than in sorrow at their plight and appealed for a union which would save the world. The irony of appealing for world union when he had just confessed that national unity was impossible, escaped him completely.

The result of the no-confidence division was eminently satisfactory. Five Populists refused to obey orders and voted for the government which defeated the motion by 295 votes to 270. The "National Front" rose to its united feet, declared it had no further interest in the proceedings and stalked majestically out of the Reichstag. The Reichstag rump sighed with relief and prorogued itself until February of next year. But if the "National Front" was silent, Hitler—still be it remembered an alien—took upon himself to admonish the chancellor and his own allies in an "open letter" which was not one of his best efforts. According to the Leader the chancellor mistook the situation. The real situation was that the country was approaching the last act in the battle between National Socialism and Communism. The bourgeois parties were feebly hanging about the battlefield and getting in the way of the combatants. However highly he respected the chancellor personally he felt that it was his duty to clear the lists by getting rid of the government. Some days later the party repeated the success of Hamburg in Hesse where they wiped out a Weimar coalition, reducing the non-confessional bourgeois parties to one representative each. They had polled 37 per cent of the votes; the 51 per cent was coming nearer. At the end of the year the unemployment figures passed the five million mark, and on December 23 the reparations conference which for weeks had been debating at Basel agreed on recommending that the reparations problem should be re-examined, the state of necessity mentioned in the Young plan having arisen.

And so 1931, a year of bitter anxiety, ended, but in a way that must have made many Germans despair of their country. Other nations had alike been involved in crisis and were now in considerably better heart than they had been; even the new, the raw nations, the uncivilized nations, in desperate plight as

they were, had held together. Germany had given only an example of panic, disarray, and confusion. On a conservative estimate no less than 40 per cent of the nation was behind two extremist parties which sought only to make confusion worse confounded in order, apparently, to establish ultimately a gang dictatorship over Germany and for the moment to clear the stage for a bloody civil war of which no one could see the outcome, but which anyone could see would leave Germany a ruined, impotent nation much as she had been after the Thirty Years War. Nearly three hundred years of progress would be wiped out in a few weeks and the disaster of the war find its final end in complete ruin. It was a prospect whose probability could not be gainsaid, however one might prate of the impossibility of it in the twentieth century; it was a prospect calculated to appal the stoutest-hearted patriot; in Germany by 1932 the capacity for being appalled was almost the only faculty which the stout-hearted seemed still to possess. Worse still, the party which, to give it its due, had played a major part in those two hundred years of constructive work was openly aiding and abetting the anarchists. Against them both the decent men and the honest men seemed, and felt themselves, helpless and beaten.

Nowhere was that impression more felt than in "the political class." Curiously apart from the nation though they were in the manner of a political class, they were never out of touch with the nation, and they realized all too clearly that anything in the nature of a great national rally to a fatherland in danger was as impossible now as the *levée en masse* in 1918 or 1919. It remained to make the attempt to draw profit from the crisis by proving that the old ways were better than the new democracy. And now comes one of those curious episodes that is so characteristic of the backstage political life of Germany. The existence of a little circle—some of them deliberately selected by somebody or there in virtue of office, others self-appointed—which might be described as the President's privy council, has already been mentioned, and it was also said that there could be no talk at that time of a presidential party. The year 1931 saw the beginnings of such a party's formation. While it was still free from Hugenberg's

domination, the old Nationalist party had elected Hindenburg to the presidency, and had been a little disagreeably surprised to find their *protégé* display unexpected and ungrateful independence. After an attempt at mild remonstrance in the correct manner of insulting him in the press, they ended simply by dropping him; he had made the Republic fit for gentlemen to live in and now that the gentlemen were collaborating in it he became to them the mere rubber stamp of office. So far as Nationalism, the old Nationalism, was concerned he could drift back again into the legend from which he had come.

But with the development of the state crisis and the sudden revelation from the beginning of 1930 of the power of the President Nationalism began to take notice, but almost before they were aware of the possibilities, they were confronted with a fact of presidential rule. The appointment of Bruening, the system of government by decree, and the steady support of the chancellor by Hindenburg, the story of which was no secret to the majority of members of the political class, showed with dramatic clearness that the man whom they believed to be an amiable figurehead buried in past memories was actually the only basis left of power and government in Germany. Paul von Hindenburg, the man, suddenly became of vast importance.

The accounts of the President do not tally. He figures largely in the accounts of the Republic's death-agony, alternately as a cynical traitor, a ravening beast of prey, a noble idealist, and the typical inmate of the caricaturist's old man's home. In one and the same book one will find him described apparently on personal knowledge as a bemused dotard, to turn shortly after into a sinister but extremely clever old schemer, and at the end the reader is left to take his choice between a statesman of decisive action and a living corpse galvanized into activity by the unscrupulous. As a matter of fact at eighty-five the President was a remarkably active old gentleman. He had never been clever but he had never been stupid, and for many years he had been accustomed to manage his life by the process of final and firm decision between other men's views. He was not merely possessed of a shrewd common sense that enabled him to view a situation

from an angle of profit that surprised much abler men, but he possessed a whole series of very active prejudices, some of them dating very far back, most of which had a strong basis in that common sense and to all of which he clung with the obstinacy of age. He had worked out to his satisfaction his relation to Germany and to the individuals in it; on all manifestations of these relations he was willing to receive advice but not necessarily to take it; on all questions involving expert knowledge he accepted other men's views as to the facts and argued only on the implications of acceptance or rejection. We have seen his attitude at the fall of Hermann Mueller; it was characteristic of him in both his strength and weakness. He knew in fact that he was a figurehead, and he wanted also to be a good figurehead but, as far as was consistent with duty, to be a figurehead at ease.

The Bruening period was, of course, that which first brought out the importance of the President, but the idea of a strong presidency—strong presidents were not so desirable—was not a new one among the political class; it was so little of a new one among the members of the Herrenklub that they felt that the mere existence of a presidial cabinet was an affront and a plagiarism. The Herrenklub has now attained the dimensions of a legend; it is important to realize its true significance. From the old aristocracy there came many more of the creative ideas in German political life than the modern democratic critic is willing to admit, and its more intelligent members were never so bubbling over with ideas as in the period of their eclipse as a governing class. It was between 1919 and 1923 that there came into existence what may be called the aristocratic school which started a score or more of little papers in which the political situation was analysed, often without reference to anything but the inner consciousness of the writer, but just as often with real ability and insight particularly from the politico-psychological point of view. It is to this group that Hitlerism owes the few creative ideas that the party has succeeded in assimilating.* Among these was the *Ring* edited by Heinrich von Gleichen. Gleichen, like so many

* This account is taken with certain modifications from Schotte's own book (*vide A Note on Sources*, p. 19).

of his fellow-aristocrats, had a strongly mystical vein in him; the *Ring* was a symbolic title, for a ring is the symbol of perfect unity. He formed a little association called a "ring," of like-minded people who discussed politics with one another and deplored modernity. One of his intimate associates was Walther Schotte, a journalist whose talent was too brilliant for the National Socialist leaders who murdered him in 1934. Schotte had the novel idea of carrying the "ring" a little further and turning it into a club. The political club is unknown in Germany, and to the political class the idea appealed of creating something which they felt had some resemblance to the English type of political club, a club that was mainly social but had very real political influence; the newspaper reports of the fall of the Lloyd George coalition and the mysterious action of "the Carlton Club" intrigued the political class immensely. Gleichen and Schotte found support for their suggestion and the necessary funds were supplied by a little group of East Elbian landowners, grand seigneurs like the Alvenslebens and the Oldenburgs-Januschau. In 1924 the "Herrenklub" in Berlin was founded and very soon there were similar "Klubs" all over the country whose members were in this way associated more closely than is usual in Germany by being associated socially. The "Klub" was indeed the successor of the salon.

There was, we are assured, no party qualification for membership, but members were expected to have "that Christian Conservative basis such as befits a man of political mind who feels responsible to God for his nation," and naturally were recruited from the "responsible upper stratum"—which is perhaps a phrase of more subtle meaning than the phrase "political class." The suspicious student may be pardoned if, on reading the list of noble members, he ends by thinking that it was not only a party club but that it was confined to a section of a political party, and was in fact a mere assemblage of those elements of the aristocracy, the frondists of the monarchy and the empire, who considered themselves as the nation and non-party in the sense that they were raised above politics because they *were* politics, and who of all Moeller van den Bruck's cloudy speculation which was of almost Koranic significance to the "ring" had retained only one

item, that there is a special halo around the head of the true Conservative the father of his country.* It was in fact a social meeting-place for the landed aristocracy and non-party only in the sense that the better or the more subtly intriguing type liked to establish "contacts" with all types in politics and found use in life even for a Social Democrat. Of the Herrenklub Schleicher was naturally a member.

The "Klub" did not, in its own phrase, "conduct politics," but Schleicher did, and as we have seen did so with striking success, and his fellow members who had followed his talent for combinations with a little apprehension became emulous. But they might never have become more than academically emulous, had not the "presidial cabinet," casting desperately about for economic remedies, come to the conclusion that, in addition to the subsidies to the landed proprietors of which the "Klub" highly approved, there must be what would possibly be more profitable, a definite policy of land settlement and a break-up of unfarmed or badly farmed land. The state of agriculture was indeed as bad as it could be; the small farmer heavily in debt to the state in spite of relief in taxation was in despair; already there had been attacks on revenue officials and in Schleicher's own Holstein troubles which the excitable compared to the original Peasants' War. The small farmers and smallholders were organizing; the landed aristocracy was threatened in a way that it had not been threatened for generations and being threatened—irony of ironies—not by a democratic or Socialist republic, but by a "presidial cabinet," that is by the President, a landowner—new indeed, but as land-proud as any of them. In mediaeval times it was a recognized practice for the aristocracy to kidnap a king to save the country; in the twentieth century it was decided to "noble" the President to save the aristocracy. Quite truly could they say that they did not "conduct politics," but they could conduct their own interests. The obvious remedy was to substitute a presidential party for the "privy council," the object

* Moeller's influence was confined to the tiny Gleichen circle till the literary hirelings of National Socialism, seeking intellectual ancestors, discovered him. He was an engineer of second-rate ability who discovered ideas late in life.

of the party being not of course to support the President but to exploit him. It was not difficult to get at the President himself. On the ancestral estate which the nation had presented to him as a tribute of affection he was accessible.* He was also more approachable, and, at his age, susceptible to flattery on the part of his neighbours as he would certainly not have been susceptible thirty years ago when he writhed as a poor man under the patronage of wealthy aristocrats of lineage no better than his own. They had long ago admitted him as an equal; now they spun their flatteries deliberately and waited; from being an equal he had to be made one of themselves which is something much more subtle.

They had not very long to wait. By the end of 1931 the relations between Schleicher and Bruening were not what they were, and it was agreed in the political class that the succession was now open. Politician as he was, the chancellor was quite incapable of the general's ingenuity in finding combinations and in moving the pieces for the sake of moving them. He was where he was to give Germany strong government with the support of the President and he was doing it. He saw no reason to do anything else and in particular to yield to the parties, or any party, after he had publicly defied them. He had indeed been open to any offer of collaboration and he would have given a good deal for a regular parliamentary majority but he did not regard it as indispensable. His attitude to National Socialism was indeed different in degree from his attitude to Communism, but it was not nearly so different in kind as his statements seemed to indicate. A legal Hitler, willing to come down to realities, he was perfectly willing to meet and even to collaborate with, but a *coup d'état* he would meet with force. And much less perturbable men than the chancellor would have grown restive under the constant stream of

* The Neudeck scandal was less important than it is represented to be. The proposal to present the estate of Neudeck to him was the work of Oldenburg-Januschau, and both the contribution to and method of the presentation were, to say the least of it, unsatisfactory. But to credit Oldenburg-Januschau with the brilliance of the suggestion that Neudeck would be actually a trap is to rate him too high. It was only after Hindenburg's partiality for Neudeck took him so much from Berlin that the presenters were credited with an original idea of so taking him.

abuse which the Right poured upon him. If, like nearly all the democratic politicians, he despised Hitler and thought Hugenberg infinitely the more dangerous, the calm request by Hitler to clear off the battlefield had touched his pride while National Socialism as a creed had ended by disgusting him as a man and a Catholic. He thoroughly approved the spirit of the bishops' declaration that no Catholic could be a National Socialist, and he had come to regard not Hitler, indeed, but his party as a revolutionary horde of objectionable and heretical views, a grave danger to authority and to the state, any increase in whose power was not merely to be feared but to be fought. The much less rigid thinker Schleicher took a different view. The Ulm case had come as a revelation to him, not indeed because of the evidence it afforded of National Socialist intrigue in the Reichswehr—because he knew that that was at once impossible to prevent and not very likely to succeed—but because of the attitude of the young accused. Their evidence which smacks far more of the student suddenly introduced in immaturity to ideas than of the soldier, had given him sudden insight into a phenomenon which was sensed by Stresemann and was now visible to all who could see, a phenomenon whose significance he had not before appreciated. He was at that unfortunate age when a man is conscious that he is no longer young, and for that very reason insists on his youth and believes quite sincerely that his views are those of youth. He was always remarkably quick in his reactions, and though he did not understand the situation fully he saw that so far as the younger and middle generations of the middle class in its widest sense were concerned, Hitler had definitely won. The latent revolutionism of these generations had come suddenly to the surface, stirred at once by ringing calls to liberating action and by the consciousness of their own economic and social plight. Behind all the heady references to the Third Reich, to the Versailles Treaty, to tribute slavery, to Marxist traitors, to the corroding blight of Jewry, there was the eternal appeal of the cause of freedom. He had no illusions whatever on Hitler's idea of freedom but slogans can be more dangerous even than ideas. Here in the movement which he knew was there to serve personal ends was

an element which might be far more dangerous than ever the "putschists" were. Suppose, for instance, it carried Hitler away? Now, too, he realized that it was capable of infinite reinforcement. Goebbels's proud boast that the party increased by geometric progression was not so empty as most of his boasts; the inevitable was happening; social misery was causing exactly what the politicians had refused to believe or had acted as if they could not believe could happen—a stampede to extremism. Despite his personal obsession, he saw Communism as the lesser danger, for although Communism used the word "freedom" constantly, it was careful to explain that freedom was the privilege of a few, and that it was precisely the most tragic victims of social misery who would not enjoy it. Not even if it developed into a native movement would it ever be more than a minority movement. But if its thunder had been stolen by "National Socialism," a title that now was worth nearly as much to the party as the subsidies of the heavy industry, and if its exploitation of social misery was limited, the opportunities before National Socialism were to all intents and purposes unlimited and an unrivalled team of propagandists were losing no time in using them. The lower and middle bourgeois class which is capable of suffering up to the point where there is offered the choice between complete declassment and revolution and where it never has the least difficulty of decision, had been hardest hit of all the classes. The extent of unemployment in it is hard to estimate, but it was very great; salaries had fallen long before wages were cut; taxes direct and indirect made food dearer and money scarcer; any fall in the cost of living was wiped out by the fall in income. As an unorganized class it was incapable as a class of self-help and was unheeded by a state which regarded the inarticulate as the negligible. The decisive hour came for it with the collapse—even if it were only temporary—of the Danat Bank. It is quite impossible for those who have not suffered from unrestricted inflation to realize the depth of the panic fear of a repetition of the experience of it. The moment the spectre of inflation arose, the memories of the horrors of 1923-1924 broke down every restraint, and from that moment the bourgeoisie as a class was

lost to the cause of law and order. Blindly clutching at the first saviour who offered, it turned instinctively away from the statesman to the one individual revolutionary figure left in Germany, to the revolutionary symbol, to a man of their own class who had the courage and the cunning to say no more than "Trust me," and explain that trust would mean higher salaries, lower rents, cheaper food, higher prices, protection from exploitation by the foreigner, the capitalist, and the Marxist, security of property, lower taxes and increased social services, lower interest, easy money, and the abolition of debt—all the ingredients of the earthly economic paradise of the little man in a little house with a little business who saw starvation staring himself and his family in the face. Hitler was in fact a much more significant thing than the general had thought. General Kurt von Schleicher was in fact almost the first of the political class to be as shrewd as Hugenberg and realize that National Socialism was a movement and that Hitler was a cipher.

But the uses of ciphers are many and various and in this case Schleicher saw that Hitler, the cipher, might be of immense use. The best way to tame revolutionism was to associate the revolutionary symbol in the government of the country and trusting to his spell to prevent revolutionism from understanding the deception played upon it. That was the brilliant idea which for nearly a year had been revolving in the general's fertile brain. He realized that he must go cautiously. His first move was to get into direct contact with Hitler. His connections, already alluded to, with the National Socialist hierarchy were confined almost entirely to Freikorps men, and after a long series of attempted palace revolutions the Freikorps men were less popular with the Leader than ever, and were detested by the two men who, as dissimilar in temperament as they were in appearance, were each filled with cordial dislike and contempt for the other, Goebbels and Goering. Goering was an old friend, and it was a piece of unexpected good fortune that had brought back from strange adventures as a Bolivian colonel another old friend, one of the heroes of the 1923 "putsch," Ernst Roehm. Like many another sexual pervert, Roehm was a man of no little charm, and

under a dandified exterior concealed very genuine ability and great personal courage, subtler but more dangerous than that of the bull-like Goering. He had been Hitler's patron and friend in the days of the "Fighting Front," and, although they had quarrelled bitterly enough when Hitler was putting his one-man party views into force, the Leader had a romantic affection for him, and when he opportunely arrived home after the purge that was the sequel to Otto Strasser's rebellion, made him the Chief of Staff of the Storm Troops which gave him full control—under the Leader—of the fighting forces. The general renewed his old acquaintance and took advantage of it to get to know some of the new leaders, particularly Gregor Strasser and Frick. After all, a political general ought to know everybody. Hitler's evidence in the Ulm case gave him the chance he sought of opening up direct contact with the Leader. Just before the cabinet crisis and ignoring the insults vomited upon him after the verdict by the National Socialist press, he invited Hitler to lunch and, not altogether to Hitler's delight, allowed the lunch to have full publicity. Ostensibly it was a meeting to clear up definitely the National Socialist attitude to the Reichswehr and an inspired statement explained that the Leader had disclaimed every intention of competing with the national army by creating a Fascist militia; the Storm Troops were a mere guard for party meetings. It was also indicated that the question of National Socialist participation in the government was broached. The news caused a minor sensation and it was somewhat pertinently asked what was the constitutional position of a general who was by office a mere bureaucrat and who thus sought to make and unmake cabinets. Schleicher did not answer the enquirers; he could hardly explain that he personally interpreted his position as a secretary of state as being equivalent to that of confidential political adviser to the commander-in-chief.

Neither was in the least sincere; each was fully conscious of the game his adversary was playing, but each found nothing objectionable in going on playing. Schleicher, indeed, took it more seriously than Hitler. He had provoked the crisis in the cabinet and he now took a hand in settling it. He got Bruening

very reluctantly to receive Hitler—an interview without result; he even got him formally presented to the President—equally without result, though the presentation in a sense consecrated Hitler's "arrival." But the ice was beginning to be broken. The only two convinced democrats in the cabinet were Curtius and Wirth; the Catholic trade-unionist Stegerwald was a Centrist politician first. Curtius was already anxious to resign, Wirth not unwilling. The latter viewed the growing hostility of the Socialists to the Centrum with dismay; he was out of sympathy with Bruening's conservatism and he had begun to have constitutional doubts on government by decree. Only minor pressure was needed to displace him. At Schleicher's suggestion the President ordered Groener to take the vacant Ministry of the Interior in addition to the Ministry of Defence and, rather reluctantly for he was in ill-health, his old subordinate accepted.

That in Schleicher's view consolidated the cabinet and made it a readier instrument to his hand. For once he was completely deceived by two less subtle men. He completely misjudged the sincerity of their dislike of National Socialism. Neither was in any mood to truckle to Hitler. It had been Groener who had insisted on the Ulm subalterns going to trial despite the appeal of ministry officials not to wash dirty linen in public and who forced on them an enquiry into the attitude of still higher ranks. Savagely attacked by the Right for interfering with "the patriotism of young officers," and by the redoubtable Seeckt who was in a state of genuine but frozen anger at the publicity given to political dissensions in the Reichswehr, he defended himself with unexpected vigour and was warmly supported by the chancellor. To Schleicher's policy of reconciliation both men refused to listen. They would deal with the Storm Troop problem in their fashion, not his; they had definite evidence of sedition and they proposed when the time was fitting to deal with it. By the end of the year Schleicher had become almost convinced that a change was necessary if his plan of yoking Hitler among the beasts of burden of the privy council was to succeed. But he had still a trump card to play; the President's term of office expired in May 1932.

The year 1932 is the *annus mirabilis* of the Republic in the sense that its events read more like something out of a fairy tale than sober history. Not since The Hague had the foreign political situation been so interesting. The full disarmament conference was ready to assemble; a new reparations conference was about to open; new alignments of the powers were visible; the co-operation of Germany and Italy was now a factor in politics, and to that temporary alliance the adhesion of Russia was reasonably evident; Britain under a Labour government had become more definitely friendly to Germany, and the enthusiasm of MacDonald for Bruening's strong government made France distinctly apprehensive of the attitude of the succeeding National government; she and her allies were on the defensive; the world was uneasy and China and Japan were at war in China and in Switzerland, though not in a state of war. Yet for the first time since 1919 foreign affairs ceased to interest the German and the results of the most important conferences passed over his indifferent head. On January 8 Bruening declared to the British ambassador—the choice is significant—that the only solution of the reparations problem that Germany could accept was total abolition. It was the one statement that the nation had been waiting for years to hear a German statesman make, but it created infinitely more excitement abroad than in a Germany now in such depths of social misery that economics had ceased to be of interest. Of what interest can economics be to a nation with over six million unemployed and 50 per cent of it at the starvation level—according to official statistics.*

What was of infinitely more interest was the fact that the day before the chancellor made his statement Hitler had visited him. Everyone knew why—to discuss the question of the presidency—and everyone waited anxiously to see what Hitler would do; at least one-third of the nation waited with wild hope. To the sober a contest appeared unthinkable if for no other reason than that it was difficult to see who would have the courage to offer himself

* *Vide* also p. 363. Nothing is more urgently required than a fundamental independent investigation of the economic distress and the statistics pertaining to it.

as candidate. Hitler was still an alien and ineligible, but the only two parties which had not been discredited in the eyes of 50 per cent of the people by holding office were the Communists and the Hitlerites. If there was a party contest the issue might probably lie between these; there would be a period of tension and excitement and an election day which might see the opening shots fired in a civil war. Except among the extremist rank and file everyone feared a contest. The privy council had the obvious solution—to prolong Hindenburg's term for a year or two till the crisis was over and the country less in a state of nerves. Unfortunately the necessary legislation to do so would rank as a constitutional amendment and so require a two-thirds majority in a house in which the government which would have to sponsor the bill was in a minority of one-third. The solution was excellent, but its application depended entirely on the action of the parties; there could be no question here of governing by decree.

Schleicher hoped to solve two problems with one solution; Hitler was to be offered office on condition of accepting the bill. Bruening got the length of declaring that, if the President asked him to do so, he would make way for a chancellor more acceptable to the Leader. On the negotiations there is an abundant literature of a most unsatisfactory kind, but the main lines of what took place can easily be established. There was at once dissension in the National Socialist leadership. The chancellor's rather pathetic argument that the nation ought to be spared the ordeal of an election and that the unanimous support of Hindenburg by the parties would be in a delicate international situation as striking a manifestation of national unity as the unanimity of the British party leaders in 1931, was naturally enough dismissed without more ado. But while one section held that the one thing not to be risked was a defeat, the other held that the one thing to be avoided was the appearance of shirking an appeal to the nation. There was just a spice of comedy in such a discussion before an "alien" leader who was ineligible to stand especially when to him the only thing that was certain was that no one else was to stand; there were not a few budding ambitions cropped untimely on that afternoon. Eventually the pleading of Roehm

carried the day. Bruening's appeal was refused and the refusal was followed by Hugenberg's.*

The unhappy chancellor was now caught in a pit less of his own than the privy council's digging. A contest was now inevitable and where were the constitutionalists to find a candidate? There was no alternative; Hindenburg must stand again; he was the only man who could defeat Hitler. But he must not be allowed to stand unless victory was at least 75 per cent certain. That meant that he must depend on the votes of the Socialists. The situation was awkward, but it had to be faced. It was awkward more from the President's point of view than from that of the Socialists. Once again the latter had no choice at all, nor had they a candidate, and as whatever happened it was certain that a National Socialist candidate would poll more than a Social Democrat, there was now some point in "toleration" for from the democratic point of view a National Socialist president must at all costs be avoided. It was more difficult to persuade the marshal. He had been told that there would not be a contest and he was highly indignant with everybody, with the parties, with Hitler, with his advisers; there had very clearly been extraordinarily bad staff work somewhere. The risks of his candidature were obvious, but they were on the whole very slight and there was just the chance that a bluff might come off. The old marshal would not announce himself as anybody's candidate, but as a national symbol of unity; it was just conceivable that the Right

* There are two main versions with a good many minor variants of what happened. The first is that Hitler cleverly said that Bruening must leave the decision to Hugenberg, the leader of the Harzburg front. Hugenberg, who did not care what happened now, saw a chance of humiliating somebody, and declared point-blank that as acceptance of the proposal would be equivalent to supporting the regime he would not support the bill. Hitler thereupon followed suit. The other alleges that Bruening on Schleicher's advice told Hitler that he would have to retain the chancellorship till the international issues were settled, but that then he would resign and recommend Hitler as his successor. Hitler was inclined to agree, but was overruled by his party, who insisted on making acceptance conditional on getting the chancellorship as soon as the bill was passed. This Bruening refused. The former appears to be nearer the truth than the latter, although the touch of asking Hitler to wait a little is characteristic of Schleicher. It is in any case obvious that Hitler was definitely offered admission to the cabinet. It may be pointed out that an offer to Hitler was not so much the offer of a post to himself as of one to his nominee.

would think better of it and not put up a candidate. It took a good deal of persuasion to bring the President to the point but the inevitable sense of duty triumphed, and on February 15 the nation was officially informed that the onus of a contest was thrown on a challenger and that the old warrior was prepared to defend his title against all comers. The manifesto was skilfully worded:

In full consciousness of my great responsibility I have resolved to offer myself for re-election. As the request that I should do so does not come from any party but from broad masses of the nation, I feel that it is my duty to do so. . . . If I am defeated, I shall at least not have incurred the reproach that of my own accord I deserted my post in an hour of crisis.

To a confidant he is alleged to have said: "Better expose myself to a contest than the nation to civil war"; if the anecdote is true one wonders from whom of the privy council he was quoting.

The sense of duty was not so strongly developed in others and it was soon evident that the bluff had failed and that there was to be no demonstration of national unity. The Communists, of course, at once announced that they would run their party leader, Ernst Thaelmann, and it was that which made the National Socialist decision inevitable. Hitler himself was too nervous to be capable of deciding, but his lieutenants were now all in favour of the Leader standing; even the cautious and the envious. Hitler did not minimize the gravity of the decision. He was on the whole inclined, not indeed to accept the offers made him, but to leave the field clear to Hindenburg. It was one thing to sweep up votes against the bourgeois parties, to indulge in vilification and personal violence against the Marxists; it was another thing to fight Hindenburg the legend. Could he hope that the six million would vote for him this time? And if they did not, would it not be a mortal affront to the new party, a loss of prestige that might be fatal. In his less exalted moments he remembered his own cynical criticism of the gullibility of his countrymen but he knew that gullibility has its limits. Would six million Germans, even young Germans, be gulled into accepting him as greater than a legend. Would he have accepted himself as greater? But while he doubted,

over the party had swept a wave of excited fanaticism which carried away even the prudent and the timid. Six million, nay double that number, looked to him; he could not fail them. And yet he hesitated, until Goebbels solved at least one of his difficulties by dramatically announcing the Leader's candidature at a great demonstration in Berlin. Worked up to a pitch of wild excitement the audience went mad as the fateful words were flung in their faces and the same rapturous excited acceptance of the news everywhere at once revived even if it also appalled him. There was no going back now. Where it would all end he knew not, but he too was carried away. That it might mean revolution, the dreaded "putsch," would have to be risked.

But Goebbels had not solved the real difficulty. He was still ineligible. Could he be naturalized in time? Would he be allowed to be naturalized; he dared not risk a rebuff. But the legalist Frick had his uses; he saw a way out. If a local government brought Hitler into its civil service he would automatically become a German subject by virtue of his appointment. The government of Brunswick was willing to take the responsibility, and not the Leader nor yet party comrade Adolf Hitler, but Regierungsrat Adolf Hitler, having officially become a German, entered the lists against Feldmarschall Paul von Benekendorff und Hindenburg. We all have our pride, but decent Germans must have felt the same slight nausea as decent Romans felt when one of the proud house of Claudius took the name Clodius to get office to serve Caesar the better and assail the Republic; it *was* rather a humiliating business. But the mercurial spirits of the Regierungsrat rose again with a bound and already in his heated imagination he bestrode Germany like a colossus. The decision took his Harzburg allies by surprise; to surprise succeeded anger and to anger growing perplexity. They saw necessity for the challenge to Hindenburg, the symbol of the system, but they felt that the wrong person's glove had been thrown down; they did not see that with a Communist candidate Hitler himself had to fight the President. He was now posing as the "saviour from the Red peril"; he simply dared not surrender that rôle to Hindenburg. But he faced the Nationalists with a difficult problem. They

did not want him to win; they did not want Hindenburg to win; but they would rather he won than Hindenburg. Both Hugenberg and Seldte had ambitions; they had hoped for a Harzburg front candidate and, in view of Hitler's ineligibility, they had hoped that the choice might fall on one of themselves; the hope was certainly not impossible. In rather undignified haste they sought to come to terms with the Leader. It is significant that they were so sure that he would win that what they wanted to negotiate had nothing to do with the election; it was in fact the composition of the coming Right cabinet which Reichspresident Hitler would be shortly appointing. They could not have chosen a less fortunate moment. Hitler was in the clouds far above the Harzburg front. He would dictate terms not make them. The new cabinet would not be a Harzburg front one but a National Socialist, a revolutionary one. He was not sure if he would have any representative of the social reactionaries in it but, if he decided that he would, Hugenberg might have the Finance Ministry if none of his own followers wanted it. Smarting under the rebuff his late allies decided to do their best to spoil his chances. They decided to run their own candidate who was certain to be at the bottom of the poll, but they did not smart sufficiently to be reckless. Neither Seldte nor Hugenberg would risk such a humiliation—it was the Nationalist candidate who had headed the first poll in 1925—and so the second in command of the Stahlhelm, the unfortunate Duesterberg, was dragged out like a lamb to the slaughter.

It was clearly the government's interest to have the election over as soon as possible so as to give the propaganda department of the Hitlerites no more time than could be helped. The poll was fixed for March 13. Now ensued one of the most amazing election campaigns in modern times, conducted with an energy bordering on frenzy from the remotest village to the floor of the Reichstag. That body met on February 22 and the brief session exploded in scenes of angry disorder. Goebbels was expelled from the House for alluding to Hindenburg as "the chosen of the party of deserters," a taunt that brought the sick Groener to his feet in angry protest against such an insult to the victor of Tannenberg. The chancellor for once lost his smile and his voice rasped

with indignation as he repudiated the charge that he had dragged the President into a false position. The marshal, he said, had refused his own repeated offers to resign. The people who had exposed the hero of Tannenberg to unprecedented insult were the groups—he spat the word out—who had made a contest inevitable. Amid disorder and tumult the division was taken on the Right's vote of no-confidence; the government held its majority at twenty-five, a result that was the signal for a hurly-burly which lasted until the Reichstag decided to adjourn "to an indefinite date." It was an unfortunate phrase if it was unmeant; there were not a few members who must have wondered if it ever would reassemble; there were still more who were resolved to do what they could to see that it never did.

But with every conceivable device at work then known to the electioneering expert the nation was not seriously interested in what the Reichstag said or felt. It was clear to everybody that the contest was between Hindenburg and Hitler, and in three days' time it was more than whispered that it was more a question of keeping Hitler out than of getting Hindenburg in. It was not the fight of two men; it was the contest of two symbols, between the Prussian marshal and the Austrian corporal; between "the sure shield of black bishops and red pacifists,"* and the prophet of war and heathenism; between the protagonist of order and the champion of revolution; between youth and age. Hitler made a tour of Germany by air speaking six and seven times a day and was everywhere greeted with roaring applause; camera, cinema, microphone, and poster were pressed into service. Money was spent like water, and the cynic who said that a permanent state of presidential electioneering would solve the unemployment problem had some foundation in fact for a cruel jest. Rioting and fighting were the order of the day; meetings were broken up; Storm Troopers and Red Front fighters fought each other in back streets or combined to attack the police; authorities vainly prohibited demonstrations or banned papers. On the marshal's side ministers were nearly as active as Hitler himself, and the Reich was nothing but one huge hustings.

* A fine phrase, Rosenberg's, in the Hitlerite *Voelkische Beobachter*.

But it was in vain that Bruening sought to infuse into the defending side the same enthusiasm as filled the attack. The centre parties had never had a good fighting record and the Social Democrats were in poor heart; "he is not our man but he is against Hitler" is a poor election cry. Assailed triumphantly on the one side by the Communists who accused them of supporting a uniform, on the other by the Hitlerites who accused them of being "bad Socialists," the rank and file were apathetic; at best they were capable of little more than a dour defensive. Even the consciousness that they were losing votes not only to Thaelmann but to Hitler could not rally the party; it was morally beaten; it had admitted that it could not fight for Socialism, and in a battle that might be decisive of the fate of the movement it could appeal only to party discipline.

All the fire and energy was on the other side. Hitler was in a mood approaching his madness of 1923. He breathed forth blood and slaughter, promised any fantasticalness that occurred to him, assumed that the revolutionary moment was at hand, the revolution that would save Germany; he was no longer the leader; he was the new Messiah, as red as the angel of the revolution himself. The evidence of his progress was so clear, the rumours of approaching *coup d'état* so circumstantial, that willy-nilly Hindenburg had himself to go to the microphone to appeal for votes in the name of patriotism; it was not an experience that commended itself to him and in that hour he was finished with the democratic system. As the polling-day approached the excitement rose dangerously; here and there Storm Troops received hasty orders for mobilization and in the Ministry of Defence the Reichswehr staff debated anxiously whether or not to send out orders to the local divisions to stand to. In almost intolerable tension the nation went to the poll and in even greater tension awaited the result until late that night it was clear that Hitler was out. The final figures were:

Hindenburg	..	..	..	18,654,000
Hitler	..	..	..	11,341,000
Thaelmann	..	..	..	4,982,000
Duesterberg	..	..	..	2,558,000

Hindenburg had just missed the absolute majority by 0·4 per cent of the poll and he would have had it had not the Hitlerites polled so well in the strongholds of the working class; in Chemnitz for instance, red Chemnitz, they polled more votes than the Social Democratic candidate of Tannenberg. It was a great, but it was not a decisive victory and a greater effort yet was needed for at a second ballot—fixed for April 10—only a relative majority was needed.

The fight was resumed after a brief Easter truce but the tension had gone; even the enthusiasts of the National Socialist propaganda department admitted that the result was now a foregone conclusion; it was impossible within the time limit to make any real impression on the solid mass of Hindenburg voters. The symbol of the past had won. The second poll was anti-climax and the action of the Nationalists—the one party that had been humiliated on March 13—added the desired touch of comedy. To create still worse confusion they withdrew their candidate and assured their members that they were free to vote as they wished. But before giving that assurance they allowed it to be known that, true patriots as they were, they had endeavoured to repeat the precedent of 1925 and rally all the “national” elements to a single candidate. The ex Crown Prince was unanimously chosen as the “national” candidate, even the Leader agreeing to stand down, and he accepted on condition that the ex-Kaiser approved. Wilhelm returned a decided negative from Doorn and the ex Crown Prince then declared he would vote for Hitler. The last sentence at least was true. The rest of the story was intended mainly to put in a pleasant setting the undoubted fact that the majority of the party which had once summoned Hindenburg from retirement to save the state was now going to vote against both him and the effort at salvation. With relaxation of tension came apprehension. It was now known officially, and the official news was greatly magnified by rumour, that on the night of March 12/13 the Storm Troop leaders had secretly mobilized so as to carry out a *coup d'état* the moment it was clear that Hitler had a majority. That the action was universal and official is highly unlikely, but the sceptical were not convinced by Hitler's ex-

planation that to avoid disturbances caused by the attacks of wicked Communists, he had for the polling-day confined all Storm Troops to barracks. Whether or not universal confinement to barracks is not equivalent to mobilization and whether mobilization is or is not equivalent to war, may be left to the technical reader to decide for himself. But whatever the truth there was one person who believed that the rumours were true and that was the minister of defence.

Late on April 10 the nation was able to breathe freely again when it learned that it had reaffirmed its rejection of Hitler and read the final figures:

Hindenburg	..	..	..	19,361,000
Hitler	..	..	..	13,419,000
Thaelmann	..	..	..	3,706,000

They were significant figures. The Nationalists with few exceptions had gone over to Hitler; over one million Red votes had disappeared altogether; if there was one thing clear it was that from Communism the nation needed no saviour. In a message the old marshal ended with the words: "Close the ranks; in unity forward with God." The privy council had a perfect genius for saying the wrong thing.

Not merely was there not unity in the nation; there was not even unity in the privy council. Schleicher's plans had all miscarried, and as a result he had made up his mind that the chancellor must go and new combinations be found; if Hindenburg had won the fight, Bruening had lost it. He had exposed Hindenburg to unnecessary humiliations; he had broken up the "national" front; he had identified Tannenberg and the legend with Social Democracy. That was what the general said; it was not what he believed. His policy had failed because of his own miscalculations with the results he accurately described. He was looking for a scapegoat for the failure which he should have foreseen. He thought that his manoeuvres had placed Hitler in a position from which there was no retreat; actually he had forced him into a position so strong that retreat was a matter of indifference. Even if his personal contacts had made him certain, even if the

Leader had said so himself, that Hitler did not want to fight the election, he ought to have seen that Hitler *had* to fight. He was super-clever in the sense that he made the old mistake of believing that Hitler had any real individuality of his own; he neglected the movement and the Leader was not yet in that position of power where he could betray it with impunity.

Nor was there any particular reason for Schleicher to be dissatisfied with the result. The figures, despite the evidence they showed of the truth of the double adage that nothing succeeds like success and excess, had profoundly disappointed the hierarchy. Nearly all of them believed that victory had been possible and most of them believed that it was certain. In spite of the fact that they had doubled their poll since the last general election the other fact remained that the very first time Hitler had taken a principal's part in a public contest he had been decisively beaten. But the general and the privy council mistook the nature of the defeat. They had, it is true, to reckon with a tired and rather indignant old gentleman who felt that he had been most improperly treated by everybody from the chancellor to the humble voter, and said so. They had felt all along the irony of identifying the marshal with democracy and they now drew the perfectly wrong conclusion that, if he had not been so identified with it, he would have either not been challenged or would have won decisively in the first contest. But there was nothing more certain that, so long as Hitler was bound never to refuse even the semblance of a Communist challenge, the intervention of a Social Democratic candidate would have ensured his defeat. It was only the fact that to the democracy Hindenburg seemed so much preferable to the Leader that the democracy had forgotten everything and given him another presidency. And if Hindenburg owed his victory to anyone he owed it to his chancellor. Bruening had literally exhausted himself with his efforts both mental and physical. If he had not been able to rouse democracy to the wild enthusiasm that marked their opponents he had roused up a hard spirit of resistance and he had gone far towards consolidating a democratic *bloc*. That was the fault. After such a fight compromise with Hitler was impossible and it was to that compromise that

all Schleicher's policy was directed. It was a clever policy and it was based on a true appreciation of Hitler. It *was* possible to make a covenant with leviathan and take him for a servant for ever, but it was not yet possible. Meantime the attempt that had miscarried made leviathan reject all bait with increased fury. Other ways would have to be sought. Before they could be used the chancellor had to be removed; he was fatal to the new combinations that the general was planning.

The chancellor played into his hands. Tired out with his hard campaign for his commander-in-chief, Bruening was none the less satisfied. He felt that all he had to do now was to complete his victory and the first stage was to draw the teeth of National Socialism, those ferocious teeth that had so nearly closed on March 13. Three days after the election Groener struck. The insults to his old chief, the thought of a rabble staging a "putsch," had finally disgusted him with a man and a movement which he had always despised. A presidential decree dissolved all Hitler's military forces throughout the Reich. It was high time, and the dignified tone of the decree which vindicated the possession of armed forces to the state alone was not merely timely but was effective criticism of previous slackness. For a brief moment Hitler was tempted to yield to the hotheads and resist. But German citizen though he now was, he was as much in terror as ever of a "putsch" and this time he knew that it would meet quick resistance. Treacherous hints revealed the real situation and with a sigh of relief he found good reasons for a policy of circumspection. There was no resistance anywhere to the order. The Leader simply asked the Storm Troopers—they were now 400,000 strong, four times the size of the army permitted to Germany by the Versailles Treaty—to consider themselves for the moment to be just ordinary party members and to avenge themselves on April 24, the date on which five states were holding parliamentary elections. They were merely dismissed from parade; neither their armament nor their organization was touched; so far as the troops themselves were concerned it meant nothing more than that they did not appear in public as troops.

Schleicher took upon himself to give them their revenge sooner

than April 24. He had succeeded in convincing himself, as did so many others, that Hitler triumphant was Hitler an easier prey; after his immense poll he would see reason the quicker. And to help him to see reason and to further his own plans, Schleicher took upon himself to counter Groener's attack. He had to, for the cabinet, if haltingly, had at last declared war on Hitler and everyone in touch with politics knew that for all practical purposes he was a member of it. Loyalty and discipline sat lightly upon him. Behind the back of his chief he hastened to the President, a rather tired, ill-tempered old man these days who hating Storm Troops on principle had signed the decree without really examining it. The general had no difficulty in showing him the monstrous injustice of it. After all, these were "national" troops capable of being used some day in the national cause. Yet the minister of defence had singled them out for suppression, and had left untouched the similar forces of the Socialists and Communists who were far more dangerous. This was simply untrue for the Red Front Fighters and the Iron Front were neither armed nor decently organized, whereas the Storm Troops were paid, drilled, officered, equipped, and armed, a true mercenary force, and in spite of a poor material were infinitely more fit for action than the loose formations of their opponents. The marshal did not argue. He wrote an offensive letter to Groener in which he said that it had been brought to his knowledge that the new decree was one-sided and ordered him to see that it applied to any irregular and illegal force. Groener, although taken aback, defended himself with unexpected vigour, pointing out that the Iron Front against which the criticism actually was levied—for the Red Fighting Front had always been illegal—was a harmless body, and eventually a compromise was reached. The ban on the Storm Troops was not removed, but the Iron Front were warned to be careful. Schleicher was baulked again.

April 24 afforded him another proof of the urgency of reaching some sort of settlement with Hitler. It was a day of amazing National Socialist election successes. In Prussia they won 36·3 per cent and 162 seats, reducing the Nationalists from seventy-one to thirty-one, the Populists from forty to seven, and the

Democrats from twenty-two to two. The Communists showed a sensible but not an imposing gain. The same success was won in Bavaria, Wuerttemberg, Anhalt, and Hamburg. Except in Bavaria, everywhere the National Socialists were now easily the strongest party. Schleicher felt that time was pressing; at all costs a settlement must be reached before the famous 51 per cent was attained.

Under the shadow of these defeats rather than of the President's victory the Reichstag met in a curious mood. Triumph radiated from the extremist benches; gloom hung heavily over the democratic ones and the unease of the Nationalists was plainly visible. Rumour was very busy and there was what the lobbies called with more truth than usual a crisis atmosphere. Criticism was restrained but effective—for once the National Socialists preferred argument to desk-banging—and equally effective were the replies of Groener and the chancellor, both of whom firmly declined to remove the ban on the Storm Troops. The cabinet forces held together and the now conventional motion of no-confidence was defeated by twenty votes. But the crisis had already come. Schleicher had struck his final blow. Immediately after Groener had sat down, he had gone to him and informed him curtly that the Defence Ministry had now no confidence in him. The attack was quite unexpected and the attacker even still less so. Groener who was in ill-health had already arranged with Bruening to hand over the Ministry of Defence to Schleicher, partly because he wanted to gratify his subordinate's ambition, partly because he felt that he would be less irresponsible if he were in the cabinet. And now the "son" had stabbed the "father" in the back by mobilizing the Reichswehr staff against him. Groener knew the Reichswehr staff well; he knew that as a reputed democrat he was not popular with men who still bore him a grudge for the part he had played in 1918-1919. But he also knew that most of them were loyal gentlemen and that when Schleicher spoke he spoke for himself. In angry disillusion he took his resignation to the chancellor who, despite all his pleadings, failed to induce him to reconsider it for the Defence Ministry, but succeeded so far as to induce him to stay on at least temporarily at the

Ministry of the Interior. There were important national and international political events pending and he wanted at all costs to avoid a cabinet crisis. But he need not have troubled; his own days as chancellor were numbered.

Behind the scenes the political class was exceptionally busy, and in the Herrenklub there was a little conspiracy going on which they fondly imagined was at once similar to and much more important than the "Carlton Club conspiracy" which had brought down Lloyd George. The self-constituted presidential party came of families that had become what they were by knowing how to bide their times; they had been biding this time for years and now they had not so long to bide. Their action has been sometimes misrepresented, but it is quite clear if one remembers that they represented not the old Nationalism nor the new Nationalism, but the newer Nationalism—in the political sense—that was older in the historical sense than either the Nationalist party or the Hugenberg faction, the landed aristocracy, which having governed Wilhelmian Prussia through its cadets and through selected representatives was now proposing itself to govern and so save the state from crisis. And crisis to them meant crisis for the landed aristocracy. Their plans were simple in the extreme. They had no more respect for Hitler than they had for any other demagogue and no respect for his legions, but they thought they could use both. They saw Hitler's difficulties in accepting a compromise with Bruening such as would have put him in a subordinate position. But they could see no difficulty at all in Hitler's acceptance of a subordinate position which gave him, a mason's labourer and a corporal, social equality with Prussian aristocrats and Prussian generals. Social equality was the bribe they proposed to hold out; they had never known its attractive power to fail, not even with a Social Democrat; and they knew that Hitler was a snob. For some time their henchmen in journalism had been subtly changing the slogan "More power to the President" into "All power to the President." And the President was "one of themselves." They had not the slightest interest in the present "national" front, and had no intention of admitting any of its leaders to real power; they had no views

at all on the composition of the cabinet; a cabinet of bureaucrats such as many imperial cabinets had been would serve their purposes but so would a cabinet of politicians provided it was clearly understood who were the cabinet's masters; they had not even a policy; they represented what they called *ad nauseam* the Christian-Conservative standpoint, enlightened oligarchy as they might have called it, if they had not been so sure that the nation and themselves were one, and that the rule of the landed aristocracy, instead of being what it was, class rule of a peculiarly narrow type, was actually the finest brand of democracy—the government of the rest by the best.

For the Papens, Alvenslebens, Oldenburgs, and the like, Schleicher had a fundamental contempt, the contempt that the man immersed in politics has for the squire and the flaneur. To Schleicher East Elbia was an intellectual wilderness, the last stronghold of mediaevalism; he did not at all realize that the intelligence of the ultra-civilized town will always find itself hard put to it to overcome the cunning of the uncivilized country. None of them would have claimed to be his equal in subtlety and finesse, and he was completely deceived by the cordiality and respect which they showed him. Once he had come to the conclusion that into his brilliant combinations Bruening would no longer fit, he fell back on the presidential party. He outlined to the Herrenklub leaders his views on the situation and the necessity of incorporating the "national" elements in the state, of turning the "national" front into a basis of aristocratic government, indicated a whole variety of combinations, showed the importance of finishing with the party system and of taking the chance offered to reduce the Left to the position of impotence in which it was in 1914, and found ready listeners. These men were good judges of talk and Schleicher was an excellent talker. The whole plan of bringing down the cabinet or rather tricking it into bringing itself down was worked out in detail.

Quite unconscious of what was going on behind his back, Bruening, whose health as a result of his election exertions and of the strain of double office was none too good, had seen signs of hope at last. Germany was on the eve of a great international

triumph because he knew that reparations could not but be abolished, and all the reports that he now had indicated that, although the state of the country was the reverse of cheerful, the depression had touched bottom. There were signs of a coming world revival and, if these were not false prophets, there would be real hope that the aid that Germany so urgently needed might be forthcoming. He prepared a new decree for the President's signature. It represented what he hoped would be a last attempt to clear up the financial situation by piling up some extra taxation, which looked bad but was according to his financial experts necessary, and which he hoped might soon be taken off. But it also provided for the compulsory acquisition of land in the east, mainly uncultivated or unprofitably-managed land belonging to the great estates; the land on which the *Osthilfe* had been to a large extent wasted, and for presenting it free to farmers who would be tenants of the state. It was in fact, though of all the cabinet only Stegerwald would have claimed it to be, the beginning of a very necessary offensive against the East Elbian *latifundia*.

Cabinet secrets were rarely kept in Germany, where the cabinet was always so subservient to somebody, but in this case they were kept. It was left to Schleicher and his intimates in the privy council to give them away. The "presidential party" was kept faithfully informed by Schleicher either directly or through Oskar von Hindenburg, and it realized that now the alliance with Schleicher must be made firm and action taken. At Neudeck his neighbours, the lord of Oldenburg-Januschau at their head, worked on the old marshal. They did it by ordinary conversation with a cunning that surpassed Schleicher's cleverness. The result was that, when Meissner arrived to submit the decree, he found the President in a state of indignant interrogation. One glance at the precious document and he saw that all that had been told him as rumour was true in fact. War veterans, war orphans, and war-disabled were to be mulcted of part of their scanty allowances, and the wicked Socialist in the cabinet—the reference was to that eminent though philanthropic Conservative Stegerwald who had a passion for land settlement but who also, because of his intimate connection with the Catholic trade-unions, the "scab" unions

as the Socialists called them—was therefore to the simple-minded soldier no different from a Social Democratic agitator. Meissner, equally in the plot, deprecated undue indignation but felt bound to admit that the decree went too far. It was returned with a demand for modification. The cabinet discussed the situation; it was divided, but eventually it was agreed that the proposed changes destroyed not only the value of the decree but work that had already been done. The chancellor asked for an interview with the President.

The tales of it, as always, vary. One account says it was "icy cold" on both sides, for the plot had been revealed to Bruening and the interview, as far as he was concerned, was only to obtain formal proof of it;* another version says that it was "heated in the extreme." The old marshal who was unable to stand prolonged interviews had two short ones with his chancellor, the chancellor whom he is alleged to have described as "my chancellor, the best since Bismarck"; the comparison is not convincing, but it is certain that no president could have had a more loyal chancellor. The first interview was a repetition of the scene with Meissner, with Bruening spiritedly defending his policy. At the second, the President said that since the first interview he had come to feel that the best solution would be for Bruening to give up the chancellorship—he actually quoted the perfectly false parallel of Stresemann in 1923—and so the responsibility for this sort of policy, but for him to stay on in a cabinet as foreign minister under a presidential nominee, a post which in his impaired health was more than sufficient to take up all his time and energy. Angrily replying, "I too have a name and an honour," the chancellor left the presence. The melodrama does not seem quite to fit in with a man in whom solemn seriousness was tempered with a sense of humour, although all his subsequent action proves that he was so deeply moved that melodrama was possible. But the rest of the story has an authentic ring. Once again one wonders whom precisely the old marshal quoted; the man who primed him had at least an uncanny insight into the

* On May 3 the minister for economics had resigned: his inclusion in the next cabinet makes his connection with the "presidential party" plain.

mind of Heinrich Bruening to know that there was no surer way to make him lose his temper than to pity him.

By the time he met his colleagues again, he had recovered his temper and could judge the situation coolly. His next move must be determined by the cabinet. Would he resign or would he provoke a first-class political crisis by defying the President to remove him? Would he appeal to parliament and confront the President with a majority? The impulsive Treviranus, true to the traditions of the navy, wanted to fight; the rest were doubtful. Without a unanimous cabinet behind him defiance was impossible and in any case when it came to the point Bruening, despite the bitter sense of betrayal, was too shrewd not to see the real traitors and too loyal to have any pleasure in defying a superior officer. And if one is not going to enjoy a fight it is on the whole better not to start one. On May 30 the cabinet handed in its resignation.

It was a miserable ending to what had been a great effort. After a long period of excessive adulation, there has been a complete change in opinion, and Bruening is now saddled at once with the responsibility for the actual plight of Germany and for the destruction of the Republic. Both reproaches are unjust, the former particularly so, for the present plight of Germany, in comparison with the relative prosperity elsewhere, is due entirely to the clumsy incompetence of her present rulers. There is more substance in the second charge, but even that rests largely on a deliberate misrepresentation of the situation. Government by decree is not a practice to be indulged in by democracy, but the German democracy took no steps whatever to provide any alternative. Before the end of Mueller's chancellorship the magnitude of the coming crisis was plain, and it has been already said that, once it was seen that a Socialist solution, its merits apart, could not be applied, it was the duty of the Socialists to leave the government. They did not do so, with the result that valuable months were lost and every subsequent endeavour to stem collapse was therefore made belatedly. There were only three possible courses before the democratic leadership—a national coalition, a bourgeois coalition or government by decree. The first was out of the question not on Marxist grounds but simply on the facts

of the case, and the impossibility of the working class supporting a programme which could also have been supported by industrial and financial interests. The second the bourgeois parties put out of court themselves. They refused obstinately to coalesce on general grounds and on a fundamental disability to agree on "sacrifice." The nation left uninformed, made to believe that it was being victimized by a skilful propaganda, was incapable of creating that pressure of public opinion that would have forced a bourgeois coalition, and its ever swifter drift to National Socialism made any such coalition impossible merely on arithmetical grounds. There was, therefore, no other course but government by decree.

It may be argued that it was entirely wrong for a democrat as Bruening professed himself to be, to compromise with sin and be the instrument of a decree system. There is force in the argument, but it ignores the fact that government by decree was unavoidable and the counter-argument that the decree system had better be in the hands of a democrat than in the hands of the President and his council, of Hugenberg or of National Socialism. From the democratic point of view it was essential to keep Fascism at bay, but there were many democrats who, ignorant of what is the essential basis of the later Fascism, the alliance with big business, and ignorant of the fact that Hitler had already concluded that alliance, saw in National Socialism an ultra-democratic movement which might be brought into a bourgeois coalition; after all it was in essence a lower middle class movement and the Goerings, the Roehms, and the Storm Troops might well be passing phenomena. In any case, it was the bourgeois coalitions that had let the movement grow, having failed to indict Hitler of high treason and to dissolve his private army as could have been done with ease; having tamely permitted an alien to create a private army on German soil, they had to put up with it. Accustomed to endless combination the bourgeois politicians never despaired—some of them do not despair yet—of bringing Hitler in with them. Accustomed to eternal compromise they could not conceive the possibility of finding a political leader who either could not or would not compromise. They never believed Hitlerism to be a menace. But at the same

time they did not ignore the fact that in power it might be a menace. That was why they opposed a stout resistance to a Hitler chancellorship which might have got a democratic majority and needed no decree system; they insisted that any alliance should be on their terms, and these terms Hitler refused to consider.

German democracy therefore accepted the decree system simply because it could not help itself. As we have seen, the Socialists rejected Bruening's attempt at it originally and then, faced with the prospect of dissolutions which could only increase the strength of National Socialism, ended by accepting it and keeping Bruening in power. For the continuance of the decree system the united democracy takes the responsibility.

Nor can there be any very vital criticism of the contents of the decrees. Drastic they were undoubtedly, but drastic legislation was necessary. The real target of criticism is the political system that had made them necessary and necessarily so drastic. They failed in their effect because they all came too late, an attempt to strengthen the foundations of the house when the flood was already swirling round it. They are indeed open to much political and economic criticism in detail, but they were an honest attempt to stave off disaster and they did stave off disaster. Say what one will of Bruening, and that he was a great statesman it is impossible to maintain, it was due to him and to him alone that Germany did not collapse in 1931 and that, when he resigned, the feet of a drowning nation had touched firm ground. Admittedly the fact was not apparent to a people crushed by taxation and seeing everything apparently going to pieces, but it was easy to draw appalling conclusions from one's own conditions when these seemed to be borne out by the exaggerated tales of disaster which even official statistics carried. In 1931 the upkeep of the Storm Troops alone was costing the National Socialist party—the party of the desperate and the impoverished—over £500,000 a year; there was more money in Germany than the tax-gatherer got. German officialdom invariably overdoes it; it was so concerned to convince foreign nations that it was utterly ruined that it ended by convincing its own people. This is not to deny that there was economic misery, but simply to state that some of the social

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misery was not economic at all. It was not starvation that the middle class feared so much as declassment. That declassment no chancellor could avert; its progress in Germany was merely the exaggeration of a general phenomenon. But economic misery could be and was dealt with. During Bruening's chancellorship the nation ceased to be a factor in the struggle; it had simply ceased to fight as a nation. And yet at the end of that chancellorship it was still a nation. That surely, if a negative, was none the less a great achievement.

Where Bruening may be criticized is in his conception of his mission, in his curious military attitude towards his chief, in his aloofness from the nation. It was perfectly impossible for him to do what Stresemann had thought to do, identify himself with the nation and use the nation to impose his will on the politicians. He had none of Stresemann's intense humanity. He was not the leader; he was the doctor working coldly to save the patient's life, always apart from it, forcing it to take remedies of extreme nauseatingness, never bringing it into active co-operation with him. There again it was the fault of the system, the fault that Hitler did not commit. There was no gulf between Hitler and his followers save the gulf of discipline and hierarchic distinction; they were a unity. Between the government and the nation there was still the impassable gulf. Government and nation were not a unity even in so dire an emergency and Bruening was the last man to create that unity. He was not a great man nor even a great statesman, but he was an honest man and a patriotic man whose defects were too big for him. And above all he was a man of courage. He brought to the task of saving Germany that same cold determination that he had brought to the task of holding the line on that "black eighth of August 1918," and this time the line held. For that achievement, that courage, not for the economic decrees that he took over from his experts, which other experts have rent in pieces and which later experts will probably piece together again, he deserved well of his country. He made many mistakes, but he made only one fatal one and that was to believe, poor unprofessional hero that he was, that a uniform is a guarantee of loyalty.

CHAPTER IX

THE "CABINET OF THE BARONS" AND THE FALL OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT

THE great secret had been well kept and the nation, innured though it was to the fall of chancellors, was taken completely by surprise. The victory of the President had seemed a guarantee of the continuance of the cabinet, for no less than Bruening did ordinary people have illusions about loyalty, and his fall came as a shock even to most of the political leaders. But it was a mild shock to the one that was administered two days later.

The political leaders, including Hitler, were all received by the President on May 31st. They were in a state of great excitement, for the succession seemed extraordinarily open. The party executives prepared for a prolonged negotiation of the old style. Hugenberg thought of a dissolution and a Harzburg cabinet; Hitler thought also of a dissolution and wiping out the Nationalists finally. The Communists, whose leader was not consulted even *pro forma*, openly exulted; the revolutionary moment was being brought nearer. The Centrum was temporarily speechless with indignation. Only the Social Democrats were gloomy. They could see no chance of a Left coalition and, having experienced whips, were now prepared for scorpions. But even they were taken by surprise when the official announcement came that the President had instructed Franz Freiherr von Papen to form "a government of national concentration."

It was with complete curtness that Germany was introduced to her man of destiny. No one could have been less like a man of destiny than he. Very few people had heard of him, and of those few a good number had found it convenient to forget him. Now in his fifty-first year, he was the scion of an old Westphalian family, which claimed to go back to the days of Charlemagne. A subaltern in the Duesseldorf Uhlans, where he was known as a daring horseman, a fine dancer, and a cheerful boon companion, he was the direct descendant of the Ouida guardsmen, and of the

type that was severely frowned upon by the older army chiefs brought up in the stern Moltke tradition; the type which had too much money and spent it much too freely. He danced his way into the heart of one of the charming daughters of the great industrial house of Villeroy and Boch in the Saar and through his marriage not only greatly increased his substance, but became intimately connected on the one hand with the Franco-Belgian aristocracy, and on the other with the big Rhenish-Westphalian industrialists. Transferred to the 1st Uhlans of the Guard, the crack cavalry regiment so bitterly detested by the officer of the line, he was not the sort of officer who is picked to rise in his profession. But his birth was excellent, his income large, and his social success undoubted. So he was packed off to Mexico in 1913 as military attaché and shortly after was transferred to Washington. During the war Captain von Papen was a notorious figure, but not exactly a success. Always the enthusiastic amateur, he flung himself into the work of espionage and then into the work of sabotage. His complicity in outrages in American munition works having been proved by his leaving important and compromising documents in a public conveyance, the American government with considerable charity contented themselves with expelling him. He had learned no lessons by his incursions into the diplomatic underworld. Confident in diplomatic immunity for his person, he forgot that it did not extend to his luggage, and when the boat on which he was travelling was stopped by the British at Falmouth the gallant major was allowed to proceed, but without his baggage, which included all his secret papers whose capture landed not a few German agents in British and American concentration camps. Nothing daunted, Colonel von Papen got a staff appointment in Palestine. Once again he was careless; he made no preparations for destroying documents, and when the British broke through the Turkish front he himself got away in time, but had to leave all the confidential staff papers to a surprised but grateful enemy.

After the war Papen disappeared from the public eye, but he was none the less an important person. His industrialist relations liked to be connected with him, but they had much too much

sense to let him go into business. They could, however, and did use him as their agent and behind the scenes Papen was extremely active as the connecting link between that section of big business which does not go into politics but likes discreetly to influence them and the aristocracy whose schemes occasionally require subsidies. That did not take up a great deal of time. He still frequented race meetings and ballrooms and was still occasionally to be seen as a gentleman rider, but he was getting a little old for that sort of diversion and he turned bookish. He began to read and to read politics. A conventional Catholic, it was easy for him to develop the mystical creed of "Christian Conservatism" which combined a desire to abolish the opportunities of the lower classes for vicarious sexual excitement through pornographic literature with the determination to preserve intact the rights and privileges of the landed aristocracy. To him Moeller was a prophet, and he was one of the earliest comers to the circle that gathered round the *Ring*. In the light of his reading, which was almost entirely confined to the Moeller type of literature and to the greater literature which was at once that halting thinker's inspiration and annoyance, he worked out his own curious philosophy of the Christian Conservative state, in which there was no Pope but very much a college of cardinals before whose edicts the faithful bowed for their own good and salvation. His writings and speeches, except when he is dealing with what he actually proposes to do, are almost unintelligible, the rhetoric of a man who has never known the common touch nor has any idea how ordinary people think or feel, the true aristocratic thinker who is content with the praise of immediate associates who do not necessarily understand the rhetoric, but understand very well the intentions of the writer. Both as "Christian Conservative" thinker and as agent of big business he dabbled in practical politics precisely as he had dabbled, first in espionage, then in political philosophy. He was shrewd enough not to break with his co-religionists and so ranked as a Centrist politician in the Prussian parliament, where he was so far to the Right that he formed a party of one and distinguished himself by opposition to the "unholy" alliance of Centrists and Socialists and by tirades against democracy.

Schleicher had known him in the old army and now renewed acquaintance in the Herrenklub. Alike in intelligence and knowledge of men, he was the general's inferior, and to Schleicher he appeared as the ideal agent of his policy. He was an aristocrat but not one of the detested East Elbian Junkers; he was a Catholic but not a faithful Centrist; he was in touch with big business, but not part of it. He could therefore probably rally at least three highly important sections of the community without being terribly obnoxious to the other sections, as many other Herrenklub members of much greater ability would have been. Dilettante, pleasure-loving and always willing to experiment with a new sensation, he would, Schleicher thought, be easily managed; he had no idea that "Christian Conservatism" meant something to Papen nor that the ex-Guard cavalryman was not only possessed of a fixed determination to stand for the privileges of his class but of inordinate personal ambition, that ambition which places no great store on position but does place store on power and is tenacious in pursuit of it. As the agent of big business Papen had tasted power, and he much liked the taste of it.

Had the politicians been eager students of the Conservative reviews they might have had an inkling of what was coming, for they would have read and possibly read carefully an article of his published a few weeks before in the *Ring* which went much further than his occasional incursions into political mysticism in the columns of the great Centrist daily, *Germania*, a majority of whose shares he held in case of eventualities. In that article he analysed the meaning of the Hindenburg victory and came to the conclusion that it signified that "personality is everything, the party nothing." The touching insistence of reaction on personality is one of its oldest tricks. But he went further and saw in the victory a supreme chance for what he called "the rebirth of the nation" and the duty of the President as the summoning to power of "those worthy elements of the nation . . . which are to be found in the great reservoir" of the Right parties, among which he included the Centrists as the Christian Conservatives *par excellence* with the task before them of creating "a truly Conservative *bloc*." It is true that he ended by indicating that the first

step was to break the reigning coalition in Prussia and declared that Bruening was on the way to emancipating himself from liberal methods and was again incarnating the principle of authority. But that should have deceived no one. The article was the manifesto of a future chancellor.

In the presidential party all had been settled; the privy council had been won over; the ministers selected. It only remained to announce them and confront the nation with the fact that the old aristocracy was back in the saddle as much as and more in a minority than ever, but as determined to rule the state at once well and to their own profit. With growing incredulity the average German read over the list of the new ministers. At the Foreign Office, Constantin Freiherr von Neurath, whom a Liberal newspaper had lately called the second most foolish of German diplomats; at the Interior, Freiherr von Gayl, ex-soldier, ex-administrator; at the Ministry of Defence, Lieut.-General Kurt von Schleicher, whom everyone now knew; at the Ministry of Agriculture, the man of confidence of the landed aristocracy, Freiherr von Braun; at the Ministry of Transport, Freiherr von Eltz-Ruebenach, who had some experience as a railway director; at the Ministry of Finance, Graf von Schwerin-Krosigk, one of those officials of that ministry whom competent economists had blamed for failing to manage German finances efficiently. Not for over half a century had so many noble names appeared in a cabinet list; it was almost a relief to know that the three remaining posts were filled with commoners. On June 4 it was announced that the President had dissolved the Reichstag on the ground that the results of recent local elections—he might also have mentioned the presidential elections—had shown that its composition no longer corresponded to the state of opinion in the country.

For a moment there was stricken silence. Then came an almost universal explosion of wrath. A casual observer might have thought that the whole German nation was about to rise in defence of democratic freedom. Whether Papen's natural conceit had led him to hope that the "Christian Conservative" elements would rally to him and that the nation would accept its saviour at his own valuation is uncertain, but he was certainly not prepared for

the comprehensiveness of the storm which his appointment had aroused.

National Socialists, Nationalists, Centrists, Democrats, would have none of him. He can hardly have hoped even for toleration to the Left of the last, and the press made it very plain that there would be no toleration. *Vorwaerts* poured forth the wrath of overcharged hearts when it spoke of a "declaration of war by Nazi-Barons against the working class" and promised bitter resistance by that class against "a reactionary clique." Nor were the Democrats much behind them, though they took the legalist view that the constitution had been violated and that with the violators they could have no truck. They were reasonably right. It was no use the defenders of the new regime saying that theirs was no more a dictatorship than Bruening's. Bruening's had, they said, been legalized by the parties. That was precisely the point. A dictatorship which depends for its continuance on a freely elected assembly is not a dictatorship in the unconstitutional sense. Although he had stretched the constitution to its limits Bruening was none the less a parliamentary chancellor. He may never have enjoyed the confidence of the Reichstag, but only once had he technically lost it, and had then resigned and referred the issue to the country. He had been unconstitutionally dismissed, although he had saved the President's constitutional face by resigning and Papen had been unconstitutionally appointed his successor because he had neither a party following nor any hope of a majority. But once again the President's constitutional face was saved by the dissolution which in effect asked the nation to give his nominee a constitutional parliamentary majority. The legal position was undoubtedly obscure; it may be questioned if the Supreme Court could have declared the appointment unconstitutional. But the fact remained that he took his mandate from the President, which was clearly against the spirit of the constitution, which demanded that he take it from the nation. Even if it remained to be seen whether he would retain it in defiance of the nation and add technical infringement, the Democrats were clearly right when they held that the constitution, technicalities and juridicalities apart, had been violated. Papen's was a true presidential

cabinet in a sense that Bruening's—even his second cabinet—had not been.

He had expected little else from the Left, but he was a little shocked to find himself completely unappreciated by the Right. There there was only the restrained fury of disappointed ambition. Although the Papen cabinet was precisely the type of cabinet that the Nationalist party had been clamouring for, they had intended a very different personnel. Not one of the new cabinet had been identified closely with Nationalist politics, and Papen was officially a Centrist. It was a cabinet *à la* Wilhelm II, and the new Kaiser had chosen the wrong people. If there was to be a Nationalist cabinet who had a better right to head it than Alfred Hugenberg, for long the standard-bearer and for over four years the official leader of Nationalism as a party? There was such a thing as pushing the dislike of party to what Hugenberg felt was its entirely illogical conclusion, and he and his parliamentary associates retired in high dudgeon to their tents to await events. There was even more anger in the National Socialist camp. As leader of the biggest party in parliament, Hitler had obviously a right to be allowed to try his hand at the formation of a cabinet. He had indeed a democratic right, if one may confuse conceptions, to be the head of a presidial cabinet, and he had been contemptuously left out of consideration. But Hitler concealed his indignation admirably. His lieutenants as usual split into two camps. Goering and Goebbels were all for an instant declaration of war on this insolent attempt to deprive the nation of the leader it wanted. Strasser and Frick held out for postponement of the decision until after the elections, when it was clear that Hitler would be in an infinitely stronger position. Hitler himself was well informed. Through Roehm, Schleicher had let him know that the intention was to associate all the Right parties in the government and that it only remained to negotiate entry; what was more important, his paymasters uttered a word of warning. In proof of their good intentions towards him the government promptly removed the ban on the Storm Troops. With his private army again on a war footing, Hitler was content. The new cabinet had at least shown that it had no democratic nonsense about it.

But if both the Right parties were content to be cold, to promise nothing but to await events, the Centrum developed a passion that certainly took Papen aback. Once again Schleicher had mistaken his men. He thought the Centrum would see where its confessional interests lay. He knew that it was really not a democratic party; he forgot that it was a constitutional party, and felt that it was in its confessional interests to be so. And, above all, it was seething with rage at the treatment of Bruening. Not that the late chancellor was over-popular with his party, but he was their leader and a very distinguished leader, and he had been got rid of as if he were the leader of a minor group instead of the head of a party which represented a solid and very important section of the nation. To a beautifully worded letter appealing for concentration, the parliamentary leader, Mgr. Kaas, replied with a devastating attack. He pointed out that on the day after Bruening's resignation, with the appointment as chancellor in his pocket, Papen had promised him that he would not accept that post and that he, Kaas, had taken upon himself to answer for Papen's truthfulness at a Centrist party meeting; evidently the Centrist leader was not quite so out of touch with events as he later claimed to be. The attempts of Papen's apologists to explain the prevarication away were feeble in the extreme; Papen was rejected from the community of the true believers and the party prepared to offer fierce resistance to the government. Bruening replied with angry disdain to a reflection on his government in the new cabinet's declaration. His party maintained that his constructive work had been ruined by "an experiment"; the Catholic trade-unions spoke of the "offensive of the class-cabinet Schleicher-Papen" and the leader of the Bavarians not merely called the new regime "the dictatorship of a camarilla" but said that Bruening's destruction by the President had made German loyalty a laughing-stock and that the President elected by the democrats to protect democracy had betrayed it basely to Right extremism.

Without more ado the Centrists proceeded to stir up trouble between the central government and the states; Bavaria protested bitterly against the raising of the ban on the Storm Troops and declared that she would take measures for her own protection

against "putschists"; in Prussia, where the inability of the Right parties to agree on a government had left the old ministry in power, they proceeded to do what they could to embarrass the new cabinet. If Papen had thought of a national concentration to include the Centrists, he was definitely disappointed. He would now have to rely entirely on a concentration of the Right and that was precisely what he could not rely on, because it was very obvious to one strong section of the National Socialist party that, if the party were identified in the public mind with a reactionary Junker cabinet, and the issue became not one of National Socialism *versus* the Red peril but of the nation against the oligarchs, they would either have to side against the oligarchs or lose votes. The *début* of the new regime had therefore been anything but happy, and all parties waited anxiously for the elections. Hindenburg, at Neudeck, on the other hand, walking its policies, was perfectly happy; accusations of treachery did not trouble him; it is no treachery at all for a commander-in-chief to change his collaborators.

The election had been fixed for July 31, but it was clear that the cabinet could not stay idle till then. It proceeded to leave the nation in no doubt of what it meant by national concentration. The decrees against assembly and checking freedom of speech were considerably modified to the advantage of the Hitlerites, but the full force of the law was used against the Communists. It issued peremptory instructions to the National Socialist speaker of the Prussian parliament to proceed to the formation of a government corresponding to the composition of the house but to no purpose. It sharply warned the Bavarian—a Centrist—government against obstructionism and interference with the Storm Troopers—again without success. It produced a draft budget in which the war veterans were mulcted of nothing, which reasoned against any increase in direct taxation but reimposed the salt tax and which cut down the expenditure on the social services much more drastically than Bruening had done, until it was at the 1927 level—in short, a good class budget which it put into force by decree.

Meantime the election campaign had begun and was being

fought with extreme bitterness. The cabinet programme was contained in the declaration issued immediately on the dissolution. Cleverly combining a tribute to Bruening's courage in tackling the problems of state, with an indirect attack on the way he had tackled them, it declared that the state stood on the verge of bankruptcy, mainly because it had been turned into a charitable institution from which the individual thought he could draw profit without responsibility, a development which it ascribed to the fact that "atheistical-Marxist" doctrine had been predominant and could only be remedied by the substitution for it of "the philosophy of Christianity." The identification of atheism with charity and of Christianity with the balance sheets of big business was one of Papen's happiest incursions into logic and duly impressed those who were not particularly distinguished either for charity or for Christianity, but who were of very great importance to the national life—his industrialist friends. On the legislative aims of the cabinet, beyond stating its intention to combat unemployment, it was as sadly hazy as any salvationist could be. It asserted that the cabinet would not be content with compromises, but on what it proposed to substitute for them it was discreetly vague, except for a definite promise to wage truceless war on "Marxism, the class war and cultural Bolshevism." Cultural Bolshevism was an old friend; Papen and the bishops had already formed in 1930 a commission to fight it but the bishops had then included National Socialism in cultural Bolshevism in pointed commentary on that party's declared war upon political Bolshevism. That was the only constructive point in the programme and no one knew what it meant.

Meantime, as the election campaign proceeded, the government had two strokes of luck—as a result of their predecessor's work. For the first time the unemployment figures continued to show decline, the answer to the charges that Bruening had only increased social misery. On July 10, thanks again to the careful diplomacy of its predecessor, it had a great foreign political success; at Lausanne, Papen had spoken in tones of hauteur that had disagreeably impressed his reparations conference colleagues, but when he offered to pay three milliards of marks as a final reparations

payment, the offer was accepted. The Young plan was dead and the reparation problem solved. Although it was a success made possible only by a world crisis, it was a great success, a German triumph such as would have carried any election only a few years ago. The nation paid not the slightest attention. It was living in a chaos which was not far removed from civil war.

Coming events cast their shadows before. On June 5 the National Socialists literally wiped out their rivals in the Mecklenburg-Schwerin elections; they got their fifty-one per cent. Twelve days later they increased their poll in Hesse to 43·8 per cent and became by far the strongest party in the state parliament. As their spirits rose the party members got completely out of control and the Communists were not slow to answer provocation and to give it. Everywhere there were bloody collisions and outrages and the toll of deaths mounted steadily. It was an ideal situation for the criminal classes, most of whom were now in one sort of unofficial uniform or other. The streets became unsafe for innocent passers-by and burglary and highway robbery became ever more frequent. The responsibility as between the parties it is not possible to assess. That Communists attacked National Socialists is as certain as that National Socialists attacked Communists, that there was a superabundance of lethal weapons and ample desire to use them on both sides is undoubted, but it is also clear that among the outrages were many cases of private feuds and ordinary banditry. It was so easy for a thug to get into a uniform unofficially when there were so many wearing them officially and proceed to loot a Jewish store or a National Socialist's shop under pretext of helping on either the national or international revolution. An election campaign was a grim business under the presidial regime and the honest citizen went in terror of his life; the number of innocent victims of stray bullets will never now be known.

That it was the duty of the government to maintain order is undoubted. They had done their best to make maintenance of it impossible by removing the ban on the Storm Troops, and they were soon to increase disorder by striking a blow at the only police force which was incurring casualties by trying to stop it. The

parties had succeeded in aligning themselves at last. The Nationalists were showing themselves friendly towards the government. They issued a manifesto in which they preached the restoration of the monarchy, declared at once that "the Republican state system in Germany had completely misfired" and that National Socialism had done nothing but introduce the Socialist poison into people who had hitherto been immune; it was a plain hint to the government how to broaden the basis of the cabinet.

On the other hand the opposition of the Centrists and Socialists became ever more violently expressed. They had grasped what was coming and they attacked the cabinet, if ineffectually, at least without mercy. Even the self-confessed Conservative, Kaas, came out for democracy and the Socialist leaders addressed the President directly, declaring that the government had deliberately incurred the danger of civil war by their complacency towards the National Socialists and had, in six weeks, "by their measures depressed the existence of millions below the starvation level," an exaggeration but good propaganda.

The National Socialists, by reason of their local victories almost certain of such a triumph as would let them dictate terms to the government, directed all their efforts against the Socialists and Centrists. The true Red peril was neglected except in street fighting; the enemy were the "black bishops and the red pacifists." They asked for an increase in the income tax such as the Socialists had not dared to ask, and it seemed likely that the outbidding would succeed. Papen, who knew precisely where his strength lay and that he had the means to crush any "putsch" if National Socialism overstepped the legal limits, resolved to strike a final blow at his democratic enemies.

On July 20 he summoned the leaders of the Prussian government to him—the Premier, the Socialist Braun whose devoted work had done so much to consolidate the Prussian state and improve the condition of the people, was on holiday—and confronted them with a presidential decree, naming himself Reich commissioner for Prussia and empowering him to relieve the Prussian ministers from their functions. The excuse given was the failure

of the Prussian police to act against the Communists, a failure of which the Communists, no more than the National Socialists, had been conscious. Whatever might be the constitutionalism of the cabinet, this was a simple outrage against the constitution of Prussia and the rights of a "federal" state. The ministers, told brutally that they were now relieved from their functions, were taken completely aback. They asked for time; it was refused them. Severing, the Socialist minister of the interior, back in his office was confronted by a Reichswehr lieutenant and two men, who told him that they had instructions to close it. A tired man, a man who, though of no little personal courage, had lost hope, he refused to resist. In vain his non-Socialist colleagues urged him to accept the challenge. The police were ready to obey; the trade-unions would take action; the government would never venture to take such measures as would put every state government against them. But Severing would have none of it. Once again a Socialist shrank from taking action that might have led to civil war, forgetting that the same inhibition might well have prevented Papen from meeting resistance with violence. In vain his colleagues pressed the point that resistance would throw the onus of action on Papen who, in his present position, could hardly afford to risk a general strike and the prospect of advantage being taken of it by Communists or National Socialists, and that the one thing that was certain and that Papen knew well was that if he used force and provoked the use of force, it would not be the Papen government which would be in power at the end of the strife. It is significant of the completeness of the breach between the Centrists and Papen as it is of the *morale* of the Socialist party that it was the Liberal politicians who wanted to fight. The same paralysis that affected Severing had the whole Socialist movement in its toils. With the one exception of the chief of police, the Socialist heads of the police department advised surrender; the Prussian Socialist party leadership advised surrender; the national party leadership shrank from taking responsibility. In face of the abdication of the only party which could offer resistance, the Liberal ministers were helpless. The whole ministry and most of its senior officials submitted without more ado to be expelled

from their offices and contented themselves with laying a formal complaint before the Supreme Court.

The action of the Socialist chiefs is intelligible, but it does them no credit. For the first time the regime had come into the open with a piece of high-handed unconstitutionalism which could not be justified and was, in fact, subsequently condemned by the Supreme Court in a judgment which, as a masterpiece of embarrassed legalism, deserves study by every student. It amounts to the remarkable statement that, while it was constitutional for the Central government to appoint a commissioner for Prussia, the Prussian government was not, as a result of that act, deposed from its functions. That was equivalent to saying that the ministers had a legal right to resist deposition. But there were higher issues at stake than merely legal ones. On the face of it the action of the cabinet should at least have been fought to the utmost limits of passive resistance. By refusing to fight at all, the whole democratic cause suffered irreparable injury, the power of the Socialist party to resist what hardly any rank and file party member failed to see was coming was fatally crippled, the leadership of the working class was by inference surrendered to the Communists, and the whole constitutional opposition to the Papen regime rendered meaningless. When Papen sought to justify his action to a meeting of representatives of the "federal" states hastily summoned for that purpose, he found an exceedingly hostile audience which listened with unconcealed scepticism to his plea that his action was justified by the exceptional circumstances and that it was not to be taken as indicative of a government policy of centralization and violation of state rights. But what could even the fierier states do in face of the complete surrender of the Prussian government? Was it for Bavaria, who had shown herself so ready to defend her own rights, to be more Prussian than Prussia, when she herself was still unmenaced and covered by a solemn assurance that she would not be menaced?

The truth was that the Socialist leadership knew only too well that they had not organized the means of resistance, that long before they were ready the government could, if it would, act. The trade-union leaders, ignoring the spirit of the rank and file,

thought only of saving their funds and their organization. It never seems to have occurred to them that these were doomed in any case; never occurred to the political leaders that by laming the resistance-power and damping the enthusiasm of their followers they were sealing their own fates as well as those of the movement. Their inaction was wise, but it was short-sighted wisdom. It is probable that they would have been beaten, but it was better to be beaten than to convince the movement that it was their intention never to fight, better to be beaten in fight than to make it inevitable that they would be unable to fight in the future. But if there was a case for surrender on tactical grounds, there was certainly no case for the subsequent failure to make any preparations at all for resistance. The action against Prussia might have been a piece of decisive good fortune, if refusal to resist then had been the preliminary to real preparation to resist fiercely later. It is not always that warning is so generously given by the enemy; the real fault of the Socialist leadership was in refusing to profit by it. In face of that refusal the outburst of fury in the Socialist press was as meaningless as the jubilation of their enemies at the crushing of the "Red terror" which raged more furiously than ever it had dared to do when the Prussian police was under a democratic government.

Papen's boldness had been justified. He had taken accurately the measure of the Socialist opposition and had seriously injured its power to interfere with him. The whole incident enhanced the prestige of the government and must have greatly encouraged the cabinet in the proof that the old spirit of abdicationism was still the ruling spirit in Germany. Their fears of a "putsch" went measurably down.

From this brisk interlude the election hurried to its close. The final ministerial manifestoes, despite the fact that their authors knew perfectly well that, whatever happened, the result of the poll would be to put them in a terrific minority, were full of confidence that the majority opposed to them would be innocuous. Pious wishes apart, these manifestoes were a direct appeal to National Socialism, not indeed to vote for the government—for there was no government party—but for support in the new

parliament. Schleicher rejoiced to know that the youth of the nation were enrolled in formations where they learned "to conquer the pigdogs inside Germany." He adopted the full National Socialist programme of re-armament and defiance in words that raised a storm of protest in France. The education minister foreshadowed a complete reform of the educational system which would regard the ideal of education to be not the training of the mind or even the development of the acquisitive faculty, but the impression on the child of the necessity of service, responsibility, and sacrifice in its relation to the community, the ideal of the Storm Trooper, and on the eve of the poll the chancellor himself indulged in windy rhetoric on the aims of his "mission," concluding with the reflection that the "German nation had long ago perceived that the Weimar structure was completely unsuited to the proper development of its powers."

The purpose of the manifestoes was too obvious. The identity of the presidial regime with the aims of National Socialism was almost formally proclaimed and the willingness of the government to admit it to its rightful share as leading member of the national front in the government made patent. The declarations were so interpreted by all shades of opinion. The outcome of the elections it was confidently anticipated would be the formation of a new government of national concentration, and nobody anticipated it more confidently than Hitler, who had refused to compromise his exalted status by becoming a candidate, but had been by far the party's most energetic propagandist. For him election day was decisive. Would the fifty-one per cent be reached?

The intensity of the struggle, the deep seriousness with which the German nation realized that it was approaching a tremendous moral crisis in its history that was far more serious than any economic crisis, is seen in the fact that no less than 84 per cent of the electorate went to the poll, the highest poll under the Republic and exceeded only by the dragooned voters under the present regime. The only issue was whether the Right parties—the reconstitution of the Harzburg front was taken for granted by the democrats—would get their majority and so have no need to be unconstitutional. They nearly got it, but not quite.

The National Socialists, marked out as the party which was not only the coming party but was on the very eve of arrival, polled 37·4 per cent of the votes, but their poll having been swelled by deserters from official Nationalism the Hugenberg vote fell to 5·9 per cent. The Centrum and the Bavarians profited by the indignation at the fall of Bruening and by the fears of the southern states and increased their poll to 15·7 per cent. The smaller bourgeois parties were practically wiped out. The Communist party rose to 14·5 per cent and the Socialists fell to 21·6 per cent. In a house of 606 members the Right parties could at the most scrape up 285 votes (National Socialists, 230; Nationalists, 37); the Left 222 (Socialists, 133; Communists, 89), while the Centrum, including the Bavarians, had 97. The smaller bourgeois parties of the Right and Centre were reduced to impotence; the eight survivors had only 22 seats between them.

The result created a difficult situation, and particularly for Papen, the honest broker. His task had been to create a national front, and the first essential for it was to have a majority. It had not got it. In fact the election had been a serious vote of no-confidence in a national front of any kind if one simply judged by the figures. And in the potential national front one partner had gained such a victory that it was very doubtful whether it was in his interest to come into a national front at all. The result had certainly shown Papen's wisdom in refusing to allow the cabinet to be identified with the official Nationalist party. If he had done so he would not only have destroyed the whole basis of a presidential cabinet which claimed not merely to be above but to have superseded party, but he would have hitched its wagon to a falling star.

Actually he was not unsatisfied, which was more than could be said of any of the party leaders. If the Communists were delighted, the Socialists thankful to have got off so lightly, and the Centrum pleased with their increased poll, Hugenberg was humiliated and Hitler perplexed. The Leader was in a dilemma. He had been in close contact with Papen through Schleicher and had received assurances that both these gentlemen would be content to serve in a Hitler cabinet if the results made that cabinet inevitable. It had won over one-third of the seats; did that satisfy the

condition laid down? By precedent there was no other possible candidate for the chancellorship but himself in a party state, but he had rejected the party state no less decisively than had the government. There was nothing to do but to await the answer of Papen, and the chancellor, having let it be known that he considered the results a vindication of the presidial system, would say no more. But the party had got to the state when it did not understand what on earth he was waiting for. How many elections did he want it to win for him before he would seize power?

The Leader was indeed sorely perplexed and this time the argumentation of his subordinates, however furious, could supply no light on policy. He was caught now in the toils of his own and their diplomacy. In two years' time the party had doubled its vote. During these two years, years of crisis and social misery, it had been literally deluged with promises in reckless outbidding of any conceivable opponent, promises of what profit it would derive by giving power to the Leader; it had indeed multiplied in direct ratio to his pledges. If the old members were disciplined and loyal, that was more than could be said of the members gained in the last six months who were not fanaticized to anything like the same extent. If the older members were content to do no more than grumble like the Old Guard and stop grumbling to shout "Vive l'Empereur," if they were well in hand except for a few ambitious individuals, the newer members and especially the newer voters on whose multiplication the legal acquisition of power depended were not at all to be relied on. Some of them had gone over to Hitlerism because they had the faith that believes in the impossible and looks for miracles; others had come over because they wished to stake a claim to spoils. No matter how much they were all under the Leader's spell in his presence, they wanted spoils and they wanted miracles, and they wanted them now. In that period of waiting Hitler sensed a feeling of scepticism just where he had never felt it before in the ordinary party member and party voter, and it was precisely on them that he depended to keep the far more fundamental scepticism of his immediate associates impotent to hurt. Once the legend were weakened there would be a score of pretenders to the throne.

In every movement which is built on emotion and based on the appeal to unreason, which is bound together as a movement by an understood contract between the movement and the leader of it, in the formula of: "Give me power and I will give you your heart's desire," there comes a time when a double saturation point may be reached. The movement attains what seems to be a high-water mark and the convert can take in nothing more in the way of inspiration. There is a noticeable halt which gives opportunity for digestion and reflection and at the time of that halt there is for the leader grave danger.

In spite of fighting under more favourable auspices, in spite of local successes, in spite of the nearness of that power which was the condition of the fulfilment of the Leader's promises, there had been practically no progress made since the Hindenburg election. The movement had absorbed the middle-class vote; it had swept up the feeble-minded, the desperate, the frivolous, the timid, and it was now meeting the solider resistance of the old-fashioned Nationalist and Catholic and the organized trade-unionist. It was certainly not now growing even in arithmetical progression. The statisticians of the party—for it boasted an organized body of priests of that last of the bastard sciences—warned him that there could be no mass psychology success now; every vote would have to be fought for individually. More, the conditions for fighting were less favourable. Unless the government—there was, of course, reason to hope it would—made a thorough mess of things, there would from now on be a slow but perceptible rise to prosperity. Already social misery was less acute. That meant that propaganda would be at once more difficult and less successful, and one of its trump-cards, tribute-slavery, had gone. Those who accused the Leader of pacifism could quote chapter and verse for the charge; those who in urging violent action roundly asserted that never again would he command at once so large and so enthusiastic a force, were perfectly right; he never did again while German men and women were free.

And the enthusiastic army was grumbling. True it was not yet dangerous grumbling, but it was questioning grumbling. The grumble now was not, "When will miracles happen?" but, "Will

miracles happen?" Worst of all was the state of feeling in the Storm Troops. They had, at any rate, not abated their fanaticism. They were the Leader's picked men, a fairish proportion of them middle-class youngsters of a good fighting type who not only found in the Storm Troops employment, but liked the life. They had been "in action" now, except for the brief period of their formal dissolution, for a longish time; they had grown more and more capable of action on a big scale. They had had their appetites whetted and they were anxious to finish the business off. In their present mood they were ripe to the hand of the old men of action of the Freikorps, who believed in "putschism" as fervently as the Leader prayed to be delivered from it. Round him in Munich the cry, "On to Berlin," the cry that awoke memories both bitter and terrifying, was being heard far too often. The excitement was intense because there was constant fighting and rioting, and because the press was full of rumours, and it became so infectious that even the cautious among his lieutenants urged him to throw off the mask and parallel Citoyen Louis Bonaparte with *Regierungsrat* Hitler.

When Hitler, begging Schleicher in vain for a quick decision, urgently declared that he doubted if he could hold back the Storm Troops much longer, he was not just bluffing. He lived in daily terror that he would have to risk the fiasco of the ninth of November all over again, for he had no doubt whatever that the result would be the same. As the polemic between his press and the government press grew ever more bitter, as to the Nationalist demands that the presidential cabinet stay in power and make, at the most, trifling changes in personnel, came ever louder the defiant retort that for National Socialism it was all or nothing and that the party was prepared to stay in the wilderness till it could emerge to storm Jericho in the regulation manner, Hitler's appeals for decision and swift decision grew ever more peremptory.

Papen and Schleicher saw the danger as well as he did; they also saw the danger that, if he felt that he could not resist pressure, he would promptly become the most savage "putschist" of the lot. But their fears were academic, not for life or limb, for they

knew the result of a conflict between a Reichswehr spoiling for a fight and the Storm Troops, but for their precious creation of the future—the national concentration front. They were therefore in no hurry, on the view that the more anxious Hitler got the more would he be inclined to be reasonable, but still more for the better reason that their own plans were meeting with unexpected resistance. Neither of them had any illusions about either Hitler or Hitlerism; if they had had illusions about National Socialism they saw more clearly now its weaknesses and they were prepared to reckon with it as the older parties had failed to reckon with it, as a movement. But they felt that as a movement it could be diverted from Hitler, a notable discovery and one that might have had fruitful results had there been any solid honesty about the presidial cabinet. Whatever they said it is extremely unlikely that they ever seriously contemplated a Hitler chancellorship; that was a remedy to be used only in the last resort, and then only on the condition that the chancellor was a prisoner. In no case at all did they intend for a moment to yield power to him. They knew, as Hitler knew, what precisely the party meant by power. Its passions had been too recklessly stirred, its blood-lust too inflamed for it to be content with emergency decrees. The story that Hitler asked that the Storm Troops be allowed three days' "revenge" has not been authenticated, but permission would be taken if Hitler got power. Whether it performed the expected miracle or not, a Hitler cabinet must do things that must not be allowed to happen. That view was strongly but disagreeably reinforced. The advent to power of Papen, the circumstances of the fall of parliamentary government in Germany, the tones in which he had negotiated in Geneva and Lausanne, the claim he had made that Germany must be allowed to re-arm unless other nations disarmed and the further claim that the war-guilt clause, the moral basis of the Versailles treaty, must be formally stricken out—claims in which distracted Germany had taken only journalistic interest—had left foreign governments anything but cold. Into the Foreign Office came a steady stream of reports of the unfavourable impression created by recent events, reports reinforced by wobbling bourses, and of the possibility of drastic action

if Hitler assumed power. It was now for the first time that foreign official opinion began to take real notice of *Mein Kampf*—from now on until spring orders for it from abroad were almost greater than orders in Germany—and the statements there on foreign policy and on anti-Semitism were outweighing any effect produced by interviews with the Leader in which he promised the Jew his protection and the French security, and announced National Socialist foreign policy to be a practical application of the apostolic counsel to love one another. Neurath, second-rate, feeble, easily impressed, told Papen that the Foreign Office could not answer for the consequences if Hitler became chancellor, even if he were completely the prisoner of his colleagues. On the other hand the Reichswehr command had its word to say. It had followed Schleicher blindly in his tortuous policies, approved the presidial system, approved the national front, but it could blind itself neither to the character of the Storm Troops, nor the danger they constituted to the nation, nor the provocation they offered the Reichswehr man. It told Schleicher very bluntly that there were limits and that no matter whether or not he himself stayed on at the Ministry of Defence, the Reichswehr had no desire to see Hitler chancellor. To Schleicher's half-angry query what it would do if Hitler in disappointment loosed his legions the answer was brief and soldierly; if the President authorized them, the troops would obey the orders given and the orders would be to shoot.

Papen and Schleicher were now in a position of great awkwardness, but the resourcefulness of the political general and the cunning of the chancellor were not yet baffled. They told Hitler reassuringly that the President would begin his consultations on August 13. It was high time because the government had got itself into further bad odour with the party. Alarmed by the growing public indignation at the constant violations of public order and the extent to which the lives and property of peaceful citizens were endangered, the government issued a drastic order against acts of violence under which the death penalty was ordered to be enforced even for political murder. The order roused the Storm Troops to fury. They were being treated no better than the

Communists; the saviours were being put on an equal footing with the assassins. Nothing had contributed more to the violence of the unofficial soldieries and to the banditry of their thug elements than the constant evasion of their duty by the courts. A mere plea that a murder was political ensured that the charge would be reduced to one of manslaughter and that guilt would be considered as meriting only manslaughter's penalties, and the courts made political manslaughter a special crime of degrees by almost invariably sentencing a Communist to a longer term of imprisonment than a National Socialist. Under the circumstances the only wonder is that there were not more open murders than there were; there is certainly no need to wonder at the indignation of the Storm Troops at the orders to impose the death penalty impartially. They seethed with angry discontent and it was all that Roehm, who was in his leader's confidence, could do to keep the hotheads quiet.

The news that Hitler had been summoned to Berlin caused the grumbles to cease; the whole party, keyed up to a dangerous pitch of expectancy, awaited the result. Hitler himself was in one of his exalted moods; the doors were being opened for the conqueror at last. Hints and warnings fell on ears choked to deafness by the steady roar of the legions': "All or nothing." In virtue of his office the task of disillusioning the Leader fell to the chancellor. It was a task which the suave Papen was eminently capable of performing tactfully, but Hitler made it distinctly more difficult, and the President made it impossible. The night before the meeting Papen sent for two of Hitler's Berlin lieutenants and told them confidentially that the President was still hostile to Hitler; it was just a passing hostility because the old man was still annoyed at having been opposed at the elections, but he begged them to counsel Hitler not to cross him. Whether the warning was ever conveyed or not is unknown; in the Leader's present mood it would have signified very little.

On the 13th Hitler set out on the final stage of his journey. He and Roehm first saw Schleicher, who was confident that Hitler would get satisfaction. Thus fortified, they went on to see Papen. Papen confined himself to exploring the ground. There were

difficulties in the way, as Hitler would understand. Admittedly it was Hitler's right as leader of the largest parliamentary party to receive the mandate to form a new cabinet. But there could be none of the old stupidities of party government. There was no hope that he could secure a parliamentary majority and in any case he would no doubt agree that they could not go back now to parliamentarism. The presidial system must stand, but if it was to stand and win respect obviously it could not have as head a *party* leader. He himself was more than willing to resign but the President was an obstinate if a great old man and orders were orders. After all, what was a mere title if Hitler had the power as leader of the legions? Would he not be vice-chancellor and prime minister of Prussia, the key of the Reich? Hitler drowned any further expositions by a flood of rhetoric, a flood that Papen could not stem, from which it emerged that nothing but full power would content him. Papen shrugged his shoulders; it was no good arguing, and in a state of wild excitement Hitler returned to his headquarters. In spite of the warnings, reinforced by the cool Roehm, he could not believe that he would fail; he would convince the President. In the afternoon he went to his destiny. Nervous and flurried he was ushered into the presence. The old marshal, an awesome figure, received him standing, Papen in the background as obedient aide. The formal greetings over, the marshal, still standing, the formidable eyebrows bristling, abruptly put the question—would he be prepared to enter a presidial cabinet under Papen? The luckless Hitler, still exalted, still flurried, thought that this was the conventional negotiating gambit, the beginning of the bargaining. In answer he delivered a rousing oration, demanding that he be given precisely that position in the state that Mussolini had been granted by Victor Emanuel after the march on Rome; he must receive the chancellorship and the entire control of the forces of the state.

To his utter consternation his oration evoked not conciliation but a sharp refusal.* To hand over entire power to the National

* I regret to have to reject the picturesque tale that the President threatened Hitler with his stick. The Mussolini claim Hitler later tried to deny by declaring he did not ask for "all power" but only for "the leadership," i.e. only for the

Socialists would, said the President, be a responsibility that neither patriotism nor conscience would allow him to take. That was plain enough, but not the end of everything. Then the old soldier, to Papen's consternation, went beyond his brief. As if he were reproving an unsatisfactory subaltern he said that he regretted that Hitler had not seen fit to implement his promise to recognize the presidential system, but if he would not, then, of course, there was no more to be said. Completely taken aback, Hitler's rhetoric for once failed him. He managed to get out a stammering threat that the Papen cabinet would have to reckon with the determined hostility of the National Socialist party and that the nation would judge between them. He was allowed to get no further. The President, now thoroughly enjoying himself, peremptorily declined to listen to a speech in the orderly room. Interrupting Hitler unceremoniously, he proceeded to read him a sharp lesson in discipline. He warned him earnestly to conduct that opposition like a gentleman and to remember his duty as a German subject—a closing note which Schleicher himself could hardly have bettered.

Dazed and furious, Hitler returned to plunge into one of his fits of angry depression and to spread utter dismay among his staff. By the evening the news was all over Berlin. Making the best of a bad business Papen proceeded to rub it in and the short *communiqué* he issued left the humiliation of the Leader in no doubt at all. The angry denial of the National Socialist press department was met by an amplified and even more damaging version of the interview which stripped the last shreds from the Leader's defence and showed him contemptuously dismissed. The "national concentration front" was in ruins; the breach between Papen and Hitler open.

For a moment the nation was too staggered by the news either to be relieved or indignant, and then there came a wave of apprehension that affected everyone. The National Socialists asked now, at last, what would the Reichswehr do; the rest of the nation

chancellorship. But the mere mention of Mussolini in 1932 was enough; the President did not probably remember the "national front" nature of Mussolini's first cabinet, but he had no mind to be extinguished like Italy's king.

asked what the National Socialists would do. The answer to both questions was—nothing. Hitler went off to Berchtesgaden to commune with nature and plot the destruction of his enemies; the Reichswehr was not needed.

The last thing the National Socialists thought to do was to risk action now; the rejection had been too decisive, and the party taken completely by surprise read into the action of the government far more than was in it. They felt that Hindenburg could not have acted as he did without the connivance of and at the instigation of the cabinet and that, therefore, the cabinet was so absolutely sure of its ground that it did not fear any kind of "putsch." It was as well for Germany that they did, for it was very questionable if the cabinet would have been allowed to resist if there had been a really serious rising with Hitler at its head. But there was one hour and one hour alone for that, and that was the hour after he left the President. Another hour and it was too late. The realization that Hitler, after all, was, as ministers had suspected, a constitutionalist, relieved the cabinet of a burning anxiety but it was still in a difficult situation. The whole scheme had gone awry and with one-half the nation saying that Papen had tricked Hitler and the other half trying to prove that Hitler had tricked Papen, the cabinet, now robbed of everything but presidential support, began hunting for explanations. An important section of the presidential party roundly blamed Papen for a thoroughly bad handling of a problem that was by no means difficult. The truth was that the hand which had wrecked the whole plot was Hindenburg's. The chancellor had not dared reveal the whole scheme to the old soldier who at bottom had no desire at all to see Hitler in the government and had not had the urgent reason therefor explained to him. Papen could not explain that the presidential cabinet was really existing baseless in a void and unless it turned itself frankly into a dictatorship representing at a generous estimate three per cent of the nation it must at least "fake" a parliamentary basis. To grasp that point was impossible for Hindenburg, who had successively sacrificed Mueller and Bruening because the wicked parliament was no longer fit to govern.

The isolation of the government was indeed complete. It could look forward to nothing but overwhelming defeat in parliament. It is true that the rage and fury of the National Socialist press helped it in some degree. Without more ado Goebbels and his henchmen raised, to the amazement of the Republicans, their own old war-cry: "The enemy is on the Right." That master of misrepresentation professed to see in the incident a typically malignant piece of Nationalist chicanery. Power was being usurped by a reactionary clique which was not merely a-"national" but was anti-"national," and the conscienceless intrigues of Hugenberg and his faction were now more dangerous to "national" Germany than the Marxists. There was no sincerity in the cry, for National Socialism had nothing to fear from the Right; it was merely rum rations for the troops. But it supplied the necessary inducement to the indignant film magnate to place himself and his small party at the service of the cabinet. To Hugenberg the faulty diplomacy of the cabinet was a gift from the gods such as he could hardly have anticipated. The cabinet of the Junker presidential party had ostentatiously held him at bay; now they had need of him and Hugenberg was willing to help on terms. The support of even one parliamentary party did, in fact, strengthen Papen's position, and it prevented any Right coalition being formed against him; it enabled him to say that even the Right parties were incapable of agreeing sufficiently to form an alternative government and that therefore he must for the moment remain in power. Despite the fulminations of the Left and Centrist press he felt that in their knowledge that his only possible parliamentary successor was Hitler, their leaderships would continue the policy of the lesser evil and tolerate him. The crisis was as serious as ever and government must at all costs be maintained. "We shall be a long time in office," he declared to an interviewer, and of sober Germans there were few who disagreed with him, for with the best will in the world they could see no satisfactory alternative.

Nor indeed could the National Socialist party. It was now facing the internal crisis that its clearer-minded leaders had foreseen, and while the Storm Troops, bewildered and despondent, wondered

what had happened, the party hierarchy was rent with dissensions such as it had not hitherto known. There was no doubt now that a mighty effort must be made to avoid disaster. The failure of the Storm Troops to rise spontaneously indicated the complete change that had come over the movement. The very elements which four days before had been threatening to march on Berlin because the government would not negotiate, now stayed quiescent after their leader had suffered palpable humiliation. The alternative had been all or nothing; he had got nothing and the great army apparently had no intention now of giving all by force. What was to be done?

Round the Leader there raged a storm of mutual recrimination, not so much on policy as on the means of maintaining the spirit of the troops. Merely "most determined" opposition to the presidial cabinet was not enough to rouse the old enthusiasm, yet unless that enthusiasm could be so stirred as to remain at once "legal" and yet win the next election, there would have to be compromise. The only question was whether there should be compromise now; Schleicher had let it be known that the rebuff was not definite. There could be no question of a Hitler chancellorship in the meantime, but Hitler could enter either *in propria persona* or by a deputy into the cabinet whenever he wanted. Before the alternative, something or nothing, the quarrel raged as fiercely as over the old one, all or nothing.

While the controversy was at its height, while Schleicher was busy using his contacts, while Papen was waiting apparently in Olympian content but privately only too willing to reach a compromise which would give him some confidence in facing parliament, an incident happened which all but precipitated disaster. Some time before the dramatic day of rejection five Storm Troopers had deliberately planned and carried out at Potempa, near Beuthen, under circumstances of peculiar brutality, the murder of a member of the Communist party, who, it was alleged, no doubt with truth, had formerly been a member of one of the ferocious bands of Polish insurgents in the great days of the struggle for Silesia, and in serene confidence in the tenderness of the courts towards political murderers had hardly endeavoured

to avoid arrest. The case, before a special court in Beuthen, attracted little attention; it was only one among so many. The guilt of the accused was not contested. Their counsel could do little more in their defence than urge that the victim was a wretched Pole and a Communist whose death was no loss. On August 22, on the strength of the recent decree, the court sentenced the whole five to death. At once there was an ugly flare-up of passion; an appeal was promptly entered on the ground that they had not known of the decree when they committed the murder, but their comrades could not wait. The eyes of every Storm Trooper in the country were turned to the Leader; would he let their comrades die undefended. That was precisely what, left to himself, he would have liked to have done. He had ostentatiously forbidden murder, deprecated even violent action in self-defence; he had denied not only every outrage story but even that Storm Troopers carried arms. The Beuthen verdict proved him either a consummate liar or a puppet chief. He dared not let the verdict go unchallenged.

It was clear to any unprejudiced person that the sentence was a legitimate one; the mere fact of the date of the decree made no difference whatever. Equally it was clear that sober Germans were profoundly and favourably impressed by the fact that at last the law had wakened up to its plain duty. The prestige of the government rose perceptibly; it would rise still higher if the sentences were carried out. But if they were carried out, it would set a large and imposing seal on Hitler's defeat. The government had trapped him again. He had either to come out frankly as a champion of murder or he had to admit to his followers that he could and would not protect them and lose the allegiance not merely of those who regarded murder as a legitimate revolutionary weapon, but of those for whom his divinity had been stripped from him. Nothing fails like failure. He evaded the issue partially at least and not unskilfully by emphasizing less his championship of his agents than the malevolence of the government in legally murdering patriots while Communists raped and slaughtered with impunity. The verdict was not the sober verdict of a court of law; it was part and parcel of the campaign waged by the

reaction against National Socialism in which the court of law was but an instrument and a corrupt or terrorized one at that. Having failed to beat them by the ballot, the cabinet was now using legal assassination. Working himself into fury he accused the Papen ministry of that very virtue which his Left opponents were so unwilling to concede to it, objectivity. Now the nation need refer to no *communiqués*; it could see now why he had refused to enter a Papen cabinet. "I do not recognize your bloodstained objectivity," he wrote to Papen in a manifesto. "Though Heaven heap woe on woe upon us we will have a reckoning with this government for the execution of our comrades," and to the five desperadoes he telegraphed: "Your freedom is our honour." His lieutenants, great and small, were quick to take the cue. Goering cried to the condemned: "You are no murderers," and Rosenberg explained to the readers of the *Voelkische Beobachter* that killing a Communist was a righteous deed and that any decent legal code would recognize degree in homicide.

The government let the clamour go on. It refused to let the National Socialist president of the Legal Commission of the Reichstag see the documents in the case. Answering the fury of the other side, it pointed out with calm dignity that the German Reich was still a state where law reigned, that the duty of the law was to maintain order and it could make no exception in favour of National Socialists. The nation, which might legitimately have doubted Papen's respect for law if not for order, approved. It also approved when later the government rather disdainfully commuted the sentences to penal servitude after the agitation had been shown to be ineffective. Fundamentally it was not interested in law, only in order.

The whole incident shows the depths to which the public life of Germany had fallen. A sordid murder on which the law of Germany and not merely an emergency decree was quite clear, was made an issue which divided a great, educated, and intelligent nation. The guilt or innocence of the accused was nothing; all that mattered was the political consequences of an ordinary sentence on five thugs against whom the evidence was overwhelming and of a nature that indicated their complete undesirability as members

of a civilized community. In these days it was possible for a Christian pastor to appeal from Caesar to God in defence of murder and from the pulpit tell his flock that "we must follow the Leader all the way even to Potempa." The fury of the controversy obscured the only issue—did or did not law reign in Germany?; the action of the government in finally commuting the sentences was in effect an answer in the negative. Contempt for law is not exclusively a National Socialist quality nor did it begin to be shown only in 1933. But the Potempa case is as prominent a feature on the road to the reign of pure lawlessness as was the Rathenau murder in an earlier period of national dissolution, the period that had ended in the defeat of the forces of illegality, and in both cases the same elements were responsible. The only difference was that this time the party which backed the policy of murder was the largest party in the nation.

But as an incident the Potempa case, from the point of view of the government and of Hitler, admirably filled the gap between the humiliation of the latter and the ordeal the former would probably have to face when it met the nation in the person of its assembled representatives. The presidential party, or some of it, might blame Papen for the President's mishandling of the Leader, but none of them can have failed to admire the skill with which he used every opportunity to consolidate his position without making definite the breach between the cabinet and any possible ally. He opened—very quietly and very slightly—the door that Hindenburg had slammed and waited to see what would happen, in the firm belief in the attractive power of partially open doors; waited with a cynicism that is part and parcel of the larger cynicism that was now the only rule of political conduct in Germany.

While the whole press rang with the sound and fury of the quarrel going on, when its careful reader could have seen to a detail the coming and course of civil war, intriguing was going on as busily as ever it went on in the palmy days of constitutional cabinets. Although the Nationalists were closing their thin files in his support, although the Stahlhelm held a great parade in Berlin which was virtually a great pro-government demonstration

and its leader declared that the ex-service men demanded a reign not of force but of law and a state with power not power over the state, there was no word of a cabinet post for either Seldte or Hugenberg; here, at any rate, it was important to keep up the fiction of the non-party government. Both were impotent now that there was no hope of restoring the Harzburg front by which Hugenberg had thought he could displace the presidial cabinet or at least force it to share power. Only with Hitler's support or Papen's good will could either taste the yet unknown sweets of office and Papen had manœuvred them into rejecting the former without showing any evidence of the latter. Willy-nilly Hugenberg was driven to support the cabinet with the prospect dangling carrot-wise before him of his party becoming a rallying point of the forces of conservative law and order if Hitler was driven into a revolutionary course. It was then that the Stahlhelm would become of supreme importance if the theory that the old soldier is a better man than the raw recruit held good. Between it and the Storm Troops relations had never been good and were now seriously strained in many places, and in its obvious desire to hit back at irritating toy soldiers Hugenberg and Seldte saw the road to power if Hitler risked action. That such a development reduced Hugenberg to the position again which he thought he had escaped—that of being a useful tool of the aristocracy—that it ended the dream of a Harzburg cabinet was obvious, but the facts had to be faced.

Where the pigheaded but honest Westarp had failed, where the best brains and most accomplished intriguers of Nationalism had failed, the wily Papen had succeeded; Hugenberg was still a force but he was now a chained force. So far from recognizing any necessity to attach him to the presidential party by those hooks which are so much stronger if less bright than those of steel, Papen ignored him and addressed Nationalism over his head. While in secret he was himself, or through Schleicher, negotiating with prominent Hitlerites, Papen came out as the champion of a new brand of nationalism. His experts now assured him that a trade revival was really coming. If they were right there would be a rally to the government. Party ties notwithstanding, there was,

he knew, a considerable body of opinion, strong if silent, which at a time when foreign newspapers were warning solemnly their readers against risking their lives holiday-making in Germany, wanted a government able and willing enough to keep the peace. He had no intention of driving Hitler too far; all he wanted was to bring him to a sense of reality and he relied on Hitler's recognition of the existence of that opinion and of the fact of returning prosperity to work a miracle. He therefore viewed with equanimity the intrigues of which he was kept fully informed—the most cynical of all the intrigues—between the Centrum and a section of the National Socialist leadership, with the aim of forming a parliamentary anti-government majority. With all their faults there were few astuter politicians than the Centrist leaders; not a few of them were honest democrats of the 1919 type, and even if of late the leadership had become more clerical and therefore even more astute though less democratic, they were at the moment blinded by rancorous hate and the burning desire to have revenge for Bruening's fall. They were prepared to risk everything to secure Papen's downfall; the maintenance of the Republic had become a secondary consideration, whatever their hopes of proving to Hitler that democratic professions would be profitable. For Bruening's sake they had weakened its foundations; for Bruening's sake they were ready to push it over. They declared open war on the "barons' cabinet," and with the denunciations of the bishops and the echoes of Potempa still ringing in their ears they cheerfully appealed to the champions of the infamous five as fellow Catholics, if excommunicated ones, and actually in the year 1932 proposed a new version of the blue-black bloc. To the critics the Bavarian wing put up the plea that coming to terms with Hitler was not shaking hands with murder but was the only way to save federalism, a plea that was neither valid nor honest, for they knew perfectly well that Hitler was more ferocious a centralist than ever Papen was or was likely to be. It is bad to choose the greater evil through stupidity; it is criminal to choose it for revenge. Papen, as accomplished a Jesuit as any of them, bided his time; it was to him not to Kaas that Hitler would ultimately have to turn.

Ignoring everyone he appealed to the nation simply as the

President's nominee in time of need. He was a crisis chancellor, reluctant yet proud to serve. To select meetings of the "interests" he expounded his policy, suiting remedies for crisis to the character and tastes of his audience and being everywhere rewarded with gratifying applause. If he could win over the big interests the little ones would feel the attraction and leave Hitler. But he knew that now even the big interests had less interest in the economic than in the political future. All the issues faded into insignificance before that of political consolidation or political revolution, and till that issue was settled any economic revival would not affect Germany. For its settlement he, and he alone, held the key. All he had to do was to make the average German, the new adherent to Hitler, recognize that.

In a great speech at Munster he appealed to the nation not to withhold its support, not to let stupid party loyalties delay the consolidation that was essential. He outlined the government's programme—a mere development of Bruening's, with original touches of his own—for reducing unemployment by voluntary labour, constructional work, wage-cutting on condition that more workers were employed, tempering of the incidence of taxation; measures whose introduction would, he claimed, reduce unemployment by one-third and some of which were already being put into operation by emergency decree. In one of those brilliant pieces of casuistry in which he delighted, a casuistry which deceived nobody except such as were as utterly contemptuous of facts as himself, he declared that no departure had been made or would be made from the fundamental principles of the constitution. The use of the presidential power was thoroughly constitutional for the constitution had conferred power on the President deliberately to let him act as a makeweight against the parties. It did really—a circumstance which had escaped nearly all other commentators—establish the President as an authoritarian-democratic source of power from which the government derived its authority. He alluded to the necessity for authority, for raising the state above party and interest, for basing authority, government, and state not on outworn and exploded theories, but on the principles of the latest and most modern of them all, "Christian

Conservatism," and on the rule of law. A statesman was fitted for leadership only in proportion as he admitted that law and those principles as rules of conduct and he asserted that the manifesto of the National Socialist leader was "in its irresponsibility not consonant with a claim to leadership." But he added generously: "I cannot believe that the great liberating movement can remain permanently in conscious stark opposition to the aims of a government which thinks only of Germany's future." Till it ceased to do so, however, the government would take all measures necessary to prevent civil strife and protect peace-loving Germans from outrage.

There is no doubt that at any time now Hitler would have been welcomed to the cabinet—on Papen's terms. But he dared not come and Papen knew very well that he dared not. But Papen also knew that he dared not even do anything more than go on not daring, and so the great appeal was addressed really to the party in which he saw a continually greater number asking the question why the Leader did not dare do something.

The intelligent section of the leadership was recognizing now that in the hectic months of geometric progression when only heads were counted, there had been unexpected developments among the real party, the revolutionary *élite*. It is a development that is difficult to explain because with dramatic suddenness events were to check abruptly the process of change and so what was really the result of an intellectual process is often simply ascribed to momentary pessimism. The old leaders still held the stage perhaps, for the moment, a little more prominently than before, certainly more prominently than the Leader liked, despite the fact that as they grew in stature he himself grew bigger as their symbolic head. But in the background there was growing up a new leadership, the leadership which, if there was no interruption to growth, would one day take the place of the old. It was an intellectual leadership, the first time such a phrase could be applied to any section of the National Socialist party. If it was Hitler's supreme gift to be able to emulate the fictional lady who maintained her influence by turning second-hand ideas into first-rate emotions, first-rate emotions were beginning to produce at

last first-hand ideas. The moment emotional excitement reached a pitch at which it stayed till it became conventional, intellectual questioning began. The men in or near the thirties in the party began to query their own emotionalism, to ask what they themselves meant by National Socialism. Was it negative "national" opposition to Marxism and barons and Jews or was it positive "Socialist" construction? Amid the welter of second-hand ideas they were—often subconsciously—beginning to select and combine and making the new synthesis. For the first time party men began to forget Hitler and think of National Socialism not as a movement, but as a policy; for the first time in their minds National Socialism took on definiteness. The programme was no longer visible on brave, strong faces; it was being worked out in a much more dangerous place—hungry, eager minds. For what from the point of view of the old leadership was dangerous was that those minds could not but realize that that leadership had not made one step towards that synthesis and was, in fact, composed of old-fashioned politicians and their *sbirri*, angling and fighting for power.

The whole attention of the leadership and so of the rank and file had been concentrated on this dizzy ascent to power; now when the door to power had been slammed the failure of the leadership to kick it open had produced a fatal sequence—anticipation, disappointment, inaction—and infused into the party that spirit of defeatism from which, so far, even if its Leader had not always been, it had been steadily free. The cry of Goebbels met with little response from the rank and file; they remembered in their new critical mood that not so long ago he had deserted Otto Strasser when he sought to force the revolutionary pace; remembered also that he and Goering, his present ally, had been the bitterest opponents of the only man with real revolutionary fervour, Gregor Strasser. The mere fact that these two were now almost "putschist" in their appeal sharpened scepticism. The way of legality had checked the revolution and Goebbels and Goering were still legalists. The thinking elements who were revolutionary by instinct or made revolutionary by the steady play of revolutionary phraseology on their emotions, had at last arrived at the conclusion that there can be no such thing as a legal revolution; that

the essence of the attack on the revolution of 1918-1919 was that it was legal and therefore incomplete; that a party which waited for power until sufficient numbers of those against whom it had raged gave it legal title to power was by that fact alone incapable of achieving revolution. This was the dilemma into which their Leader had led them, and between legalism and revolution they had no difficulty at all in choosing. One by one, and then in greater numbers, they went over to the party that had always been illegal, that had never been anything but revolutionary—to Communism—and many of those who did not go over were as Communist as those who did. If the Communist party had been a native force instead of a foreign agency it could have turned this development to profit; because it was not, it failed even to profit by a similar movement in its own ranks. In 1932 that revolutionism of which we spoke in an earlier chapter as having been balked and betrayed, for a moment became a force; it very nearly became a movement, a national Communism. Official Communism stood revealed now in all its sterility; it was quite incapable, when the chance offered, of using German revolutionism; the tuition of Moscow had robbed it even of the power to take advantage of the weapon that historical development put into its hand.

The new revolutionism was not Marxist, not Bolshevik, though in its inexperience it used Bolshevik phraseology; it was anarchist as all genuine revolutionism is. It thought in terms of the clean sweep, but it also thought in terms of construction after the clean sweep. It was the challenge of the future, an incoherent challenge; it may be that in twenty years' time we shall hear a faint echo of it down the years and date the newest Europe from the day it became audible.

The official leadership was quite deaf to it. The explosion of wrath at the Beuthen verdicts drowned it. Hitler was still a prey to gloom, but under the spell of his own eloquence the gloom was vanishing. He intrigued valorously with anyone who offered, listened to Papen, to Schleicher, to Hugenberg, to the Centrists, while preparing to summon his legions to yet another last battle. But while he was plotting as doggedly as any of the despised

parliamentarians had plotted there was one of his associates at least who saw in revolutionism and the drift to Communism a danger far greater than pessimism or "putschism." Gregor Strasser was done to death by his old colleagues before he could reveal himself and he remains an enigma, the more baffling as for a few weeks he held in his hand the future of Germany. In him there was mingled fanaticism and ambition. It was not merely a personal ambition; it was also a party ambition. He had joined the party years ago because it was a revolutionary party of the little men, the eternally exploited classes, conceptions which were clear in his own mind but bore only slight relation to reality. Religious conviction and past experience made it impossible for him to be a Socialist in the accepted sense, made the thought of even an approximation to Communism abhorrent; he was one of those queer radicals that a church which claims to be the champion of social justice, occasionally, to its own intense embarrassment, produces. He was not a thinker either of power or range; he imbibed ideas as uncritically as he acquired a vocabulary. But he was within his limitations an able man who could not long be deceived by appearances. Of Hitler he had long despaired, but he knew Hitler better than most of his associates. He had none of the contempt for him that some of the others had; he recognized in him qualities that appealed and he realized his value as a symbol. But he had no illusions on either his intelligence or his stability. He did not hope ever either to convince him or to overcome his peasant's jealousy and fear of a rival. But he did hope to make him realize his own interests. To Strasser, National Socialism might provide him with a cabinet seat, but it was also to him the expression of the generous impulse to social change of a generation. He had, in fact, discovered a rival to the legal revolution, the authoritarian revolution. There was to him now only one way to save the authoritarian revolution, and that was to come to terms with Papen. He thought the new revolutionism was the result of disillusion; if it had been only that it would have been no more dangerous than official Communism, which was to him one of the social evils. He saw it not as the result of thought which would produce liberating action; he saw it as lack of faith which would,

because it was lack of faith, reinforce that social evil. He knew that the party had reached its limits; it would have now to compromise and he could not see that the Papen of the Munster speech was so bad a partner with whom to compromise. In temporary alliance with him he saw the chance of saving the party; otherwise he saw it condemned to the slow decay that is the result of an opposition which the party knows is futile.

From now on, contrary to all his earlier policy, he began to press for giving support to Papen—on terms. It was not now a question of gaining but of holding ground. Hold it now and the advance could be resumed later. For the moment Hitler, whether he participated himself or kept the holy symbol as apart as the Graal, must transfer the fight for power from the polls to within the government. Outside the government they had no chance; inside it the better brains and the cleverer tactics would win and the possession of the former and real ability at the latter had never been distinguishing characteristics of the clique now ruling—an optimistic view hardly borne out by recent events. If as a result of that stark opposition to which the chancellor had alluded he was driven to look elsewhere, the Republicans had won after all, and with the return of prosperity the presidial republic might go on for ever. The old party system was dead, but it would arise again unless National Socialism resolved to bury it and profit by its demise. There need be no humiliation; all that was needed was a qualified acceptance of the not very luxuriant olive branch already held out. At the very least let there be a policy of toleration. He pressed his view steadily in the party councils and got curious support; Frick, the hero of the Thuringian babies' prayer, Feder, still the official theorist of the party, Rosenberg, still the leading publicist of the movement. The mere fact that Strasser was advocating one course, determined Goering and Goebbels for another and the less important leaders by conviction or cynically took one or other side. As usual Hitler sided with the minority; stark opposition was to be the order of the day and "Remember Potempa" its slogan, with, of course, no line of intrigue being neglected. Goering departed for Berlin to hatch the great plot that was to unseat the chancellor, leaving behind him a leader

who, having blessed his enterprise, authorized Strasser to carry on negotiations with the very man they proposed to unseat. It is little wonder that in the many accounts of the events of these days there are hardly two which agree; it is a little difficult even for the most active mind to keep up with another so surpassing the chameleon that it can not only change its colour but display two colours and more at the same time.

It was therefore in a state of complete uncertainty that the chancellor met the Reichstag. When that body assembled on August 30 he could, if the party declarations were at all correspondent to the intentions of their inspirers, count on the united opposition of every party except Hugenberg's, yet he had no reason to disbelieve that a vote of confidence might not, after all, be carried. But, wiser than he had been in America, he took no risks. The presidential party and the privy council settled their course of action; if the government were defeated, the chancellor would at once dissolve parliament and appeal again to the country. The President gave him a blank cheque for the handling of the situation; the Reichswehr were warned and ready.

The opening session of the Reichstag pending the election of the Speaker is presided over by the oldest member of the Reichstag. It was the senior of the parties of youth this time who supplied the Chairman in the person of an aged but virile old lady, Klara Zetkin, one of Communism's most picturesque figures. Just back from imbibing inspiration at the Moscow fountain, she delivered just the type of speech that would have aroused all the fierce contempt which Rosa Luxemburg could express so viciously, a set propaganda piece without meaning and totally irrelevant to the situation. In former Reichstags it would have been the signal for wild scenes. On August 30 the packed benches of the National Socialists, including generals of the old imperial army, listened to the quavering voice breathing out fire and slaughter in respectful silence, a silence that made a deeper impression than any of the former scenes. Once a Social Democrat had complimented Gregor Strasser on a speech which no Marxist could have bettered; now the whole of the party was returning the compliment to a Communist. Imaginative observers saw the two "national" Germanys

face to face—brown shirts against starched collars, Storm Troops against Stahlhelm and Reichswehr, Hitler against Hindenburg, and the gloating spectre of Communism waiting to watch them tear each other to pieces, and as deep is said to call to deep they heard in that silence revolution calling to revolution.

The first business was the election of the Speaker and three Deputy-Speakers. Goering was re-elected to the chair and the Vice-Presidents were a Nationalist, a Centrist, and a Bavarian.

The corridors of the Reichstag were full of bustle and excitement; party executives held meetings; emissaries came and went; joint committees sat; a *communiqué* stated that the National Socialists and Centrists had begun negotiations to obtain "a long-term settlement and pacification of political conditions." The secret was out; Centrists and National Socialists were going to make a bid for a parliamentary cabinet. With an original conception of the duties of the Speaker, Goering constituted himself the head of a new sort of "national" opposition. He obtained from the Reichstag the authorization to ask the President to grant him and the Deputy-Speakers an audience. Hindenburg, who was at Neudeck, pleaded that he was having a holiday, but agreed to receive the Speaker when he returned to the capital; finally, after some argument, the audience was fixed for September 9.

Meantime, while parliament was enjoying the usual brief recess before beginning its labours on September 12, the intrigues multiplied. The Centrists were in their element. Never had their party executive worked so hard and in Goering, now quite convinced that he was conducting *the* intrigue of the day, they found an enthusiastic collaborator. Dangerous personal issues put aside, they put forth a statement that agreement had been reached on a programme for which there was a parliamentary majority. Further than that they would not go. It was no secret that Goering, undeterred by the Leader's declaration that "none of my men will without my permission enter into any cabinet of which I am not the head," confidently expected to be chancellor of a Centrist-National Socialist cabinet; it is remarkable how little attention was ever paid to the Leader's statements by his lieutenants. The Centrists had other views and the Leader himself was content to

say at a great party demonstration against the government: "If any like to go with us they are welcome." Nothing was further from his thoughts than to participate in a coalition cabinet; Strasser, busily engaged with Schleicher, was keeping him informed of the privy council's views, which were that with a little patience his goal would be reached. Caution, caution, and then caution—that was the tactics. The leading spirits of the new coalition were uncomfortably aware of the counter-intrigues going on, and inside the party leadership the issue had nothing to do with the future of Germany but with the rival merits of a Papen-Strasser cabinet or a Goering-Bruening one; it was actually suggested that Hitler should bestow his blessing on whichever received his approval and wait for the supreme post of President when, as must be soon, the aged field-marshal went to render account of his stewardship to Moltke, Bismarck, and Wilhelm I. To torpedo the rival coalition—or genuinely deceived—Goering spread the rumour that Schleicher had come over to his coalition, a report which drew a sharp reply from the general, who knew that already his good faith was seriously doubted. The Centrists professed to believe that they had once more placed the issue fairly before the nation; presidential regime or parliamentary government. As there now existed a Reichstag majority, they claimed that the necessity for the presidential regime had passed and that the President had nothing more to do than admit that it had passed, and entrust someone—no names were ever officially mentioned—with the task of constructing a parliamentary cabinet.

It is difficult to understand any of the German politicians at this time and least of all the Centrists. Were they lying or were they just stupid when they claimed for the National Socialists enthusiasm for the democratic system? There is no answer; all one can say is that such an issue was never placed before the nation. There was no intention at all on Hitler's part to have a parliamentary cabinet except a National Socialist one, whose first act would be to realize the one-party state under the one-man party. It was not even certain whether he would permit the defeat of the government. It was an open secret that Papen had obtained full powers from the President and in the event of his using them

the situation so dreaded by Strasser would confront the party—the prospect of loss in a general election; in other words, repudiation by the country. Full of anxiety, Strasser redoubled his entreaties to Hitler to restrain Goering, to Schleicher to get Papen to propose a compromise Hitler could accept. He even infected the general with his fears. Schleicher had already become disturbed at Papen's complacency at the fiasco of August 13 and in his attempt to bring pressure to bear on the chancellor, who combined to an abnormal extent a positively eel-like accommodatingness with a pig-like obstinacy, and so vehemently that Papen resented it and permitted the beginning of a rift that was to be decisive of events. The chancellor had succeeded in capturing the rugged heart of the President, who regarded him with something almost like affection and, sure of unflinching support, was minded to defy the lightning. He had his own sources of information and felt that he need not fear the consequences of sticking, not to the presidential system, but to the Papen system.

He saw with complete indifference Goering and his colleagues arrive at the presidential palace on September 9. Goering was not by nature an intriguer though, like many other simple souls, he believed himself an adept in intrigue and he had never taken the ordinary precaution of ensuring that the deputation he led would all say the same thing. The result was a scene of sheer farcicality. Received into the presence, Goering declared that the deputation had come because of the rumour, apparently well-founded, that the chancellor had decided to dissolve parliament because from it no majority could be obtained on which a cabinet could rest and with which it could govern. He desired humbly to point out that that was quite untrue. There was such a majority, and it was prepared to support a government formed from it. The President, he was certain, would take the constitutional course and entrust to such a coalition the government of the country. To his horrified amazement the word was immediately taken up by the Nationalist deputy-speaker—none other than the minister rejected so long ago as 1927 as a Fascist and now taking his revenge on the Centrists who had kept him from office—who said bluntly that the Speaker of the House was deceiving the President, that no

such majority existed, and there could and ought to be no hope of a party cabinet ever holding office again. The effect on the fiery Goering may be imagined; there was an angry scene in front of the head of the state which ended in the deputation being conducted from the presidential presence with complete loss of dignity.

By the time the deputation had parted in angry and mutual recrimination the alliance of Centrists and National Socialists was virtually at an end. Papen at once pressed home his advantage. He flew a new kite, nothing less than the suggestion that he and Hitler should both show their willingness to serve their country by accepting office under Schleicher—an ingenious move because he knew the general had no wish to be chancellor and the magnanimity of his offer would emphasize Hitler's lack of magnanimity if he refused. There was naturally no response, but the nation was not unimpressed; it was stiffening against Hitler. The day before the Reichstag opened he made another bid for peace. He sent for Goering and told him that he proposed to attend the Reichstag and, as was his duty, state and defend against criticism the policy of the government as already in operation by decree. According to the chancellor, who was never a stickler for accuracy, Goering declared that he would certainly see to it that the declaration was heard. He may have said so, but he had not the slightest intention of doing so. He had now taken the bit between his teeth and was determined to listen to no warning, not even his Leader's. Papen, taking advantage of his apparent acquiescence, solemnly warned him that the government would not permit a vote of no-confidence to be taken; if the Speaker accepted such a motion, the chancellor would, by order of the President, declare the Reichstag dissolved. What Goering answered we are not told.

Whether all the story of the warning is true matters little to anyone; lying had so become the universal language of politicians in Germany that one can take one's choice. What is certain is that the Speaker was determined to avenge his humiliation and, having hastily scanned the rules of procedure with his usual impetuosity, hit upon a plan. He chose a curious ally but the less

likely to play him false—a Communist. Scarcely had the proceedings of the House been declared open ere the Communist leader, Torgler, asked to be heard. He moved for an alteration of the order of the day to enable the vote of no-confidence which had been submitted to be taken first. By the rules of the Reichstag the objection of a single member would have defeated the motion, but before anyone in a crowded house could divine the purpose of a typical, and so apparently innocent, Communist motion the Speaker had accepted it.

But once again Goering had failed to lay his plans carefully. He could have proceeded at once to the debate or to the vote, which could have been carried against any likely opposition. Instead he allowed one of his own party to move that the House adjourn for half an hour—the half-hour that was all that Papen needed to draft the decree above the presidential signature. When the members reassembled Goering at once put the Communist no-confidence motion to the vote and proceeded to divide the House. The moment the words were out of his mouth, before anyone could stir, Papen leaped to his feet and demanded to be heard. Without looking in his direction Goering proceeded with the division and, when the chancellor angrily insisted, curtly told him that no business of any kind could be taken while a division was in progress. The challenge was instantly taken up. Without deigning to argue, the chancellor slowly walked from the ministerial benches to the Speaker's desk and laid the decree of dissolution upon it. Then in a deadly, excited silence he left the chamber, followed by all his cabinet colleagues, leaving the deputies to record a perfectly valueless vote.

There was no doubt of the result of the division; no-confidence was carried by 512 votes to 42, with five abstentions. Having gleefully announced the figures, Goering picked up the decree with a gesture of contempt and, having read it out, declared, amid long rolls of applause, that, as in virtue of the vote the government had fallen, the decree had no validity whatever. He resumed his seat amid deafening cheering from the extremist benches, but it was not that stern cheering that has fight in it; it was the "hip-hip-hoorays" of irresponsible schoolboys.

The whole incident and the whole management of it is characteristic of the childishness of the National Socialist leadership; the stupidest trade union secretary on the Socialist benches could have bettered Goering at conducting a meeting properly. The whole conception was childish, for at the moment he could score only a prestige success. But to score that he had to get the figures out before the decree was tabled. Instead he permitted that half-hour's adjournment for no apparent reason of any kind, in other words gave Papen exactly three times the time he needed to have the decree ready and so protect himself by the rules of the game. The utmost he had achieved had been a rules-of-procedure argument on the exact moment at which a division may be said to have begun to be in progress and the right of a chancellor to be heard if it is. And when the last issues were posed of constitutionalism *versus* the regime which constitutionalism had claimed to have overthrown, it was just childishness to ask the nation to reduce them to one of protecting the Speaker in the dubious exercise of a power which he was quite unfitted to hold.

Till midnight excited crowds discussed the situation in every café and every corner. For once there was a truce to atrocities and the arguers went on arguing undisturbed by rubber truncheons and pistol shots. They had much to discuss, for Papen, thoroughly angered at the scene in the Reichstag, had appealed by wireless, over the heads of the nation's representatives, to the nation itself. As a speech it was one of his best efforts, proving once again how effective anger can be as a substitute for intelligence. He began in tones that trembled with genuine indignation to tell how the Reichstag had listened respectfully to an agent of Moscow and declined even to hear the chancellor of the German Reich. The vote he dismissed as unconstitutional and invalid. The government would not pay the slightest attention to it; it would go on along the path it had marked out for itself, the path of an independent leadership of the nation. Of what that path was he left his hearers in no doubt. The system of formal democracy, that is parliamentary democracy, had now been robbed of value or significance by the verdict of history and in the eyes of the German people. The Weimar constitution had proved a snare and

a delusion, particularly the former, but it would be just as much a snare and a delusion to substitute for it any reformed democratic system, any party dictatorship, any form of government which might suit other lands but would not suit Germany. He expressly warned the National Socialists against reverting to class-war methods, for the use of these would not be tolerated. He devoted the rest of the speech to another exposition of the details of the government's programme and another homily on the spiritual and religious foundations of the state, which announced that the government would proceed with complete confidence to reform the constitution back to the original class basis on which Germany had grown great, ending with the cry: "With Hindenburg for Germany." The Republican wheel had gone full circle; the nation had gone back constitutionally to where it was in 1914, to clique rule with a president's chair instead of a monarch's throne for centre, and with the personnel of the clique altered only by the ravages of time.

It was from one point of view a useful reminder to the nation that puerilities like the events of that day were the sheerest waste of time, that if there had been no presidial government and so no emergency decrees nothing would have been done to relieve the national distress, that all the parties were justifying up to the hilt their reputation for stupid obstructionism, and that it was high time to proceed to drastic reform of the existing system if Germany was to resist the waves of revolutionism that were assailing her on both sides. If the speech marks the apotheosis *in posse* of the Second Reich (revised version) it marks *in esse* the final failure of the parliamentary party system.

Writing just after the dissolution Westarp, surveying the history of the Republic from the point of view of an honest, old-fashioned, and not unintelligent Nationalist, said:

No one believes that the Reichspresident and the presidial cabinet—whatever the results of the coming election—can give way without a struggle, and that the parties will then be in a position to occupy as before the positions evacuated by the government. Constitutional law and politics are in a transition stage. Even the enthusiasts for democracy and the champions of the glory of

popular freedom as it was created in Weimar perceive "the crisis of parliamentarism." In the uncertainties of a transition period there is only one thing certain and that is that the party rule of parliamentary democracy has fulfilled its course and will never return as its representatives conceived and practised it,

and with that proceeded to give full approval to Papen's plan of constitutional reform. As was his wont, that gentleman had not descended very far from the clouds; he had been content to enunciate principles. But he had thrown down the gauntlet with a certain precision. "The government of the Reich must be independent of the parties; its existence cannot be left to depend on a chance majority."

In the last three words—for in a proper democratic system there never can be "a *chance* majority"—were summed up all the defects of the German party system, the defects which there had been given definite opportunities to cure, opportunities of which no advantage had been taken. But in the preceding words he had stated his remedy—a retreat to the Bismarckian Reich. That was the issue definitely placed before the nation. In effect, what the nation was asked to do was constitutionally to get rid of the constitution.

That was a request which it was extremely unlikely that the nation was as yet prepared to grant; even to revolutionaries the constitution was still useful. It is the measure of the comprehension of men like Westarp of their people, that while they recognized that for the Papen policy there was no support at all save in their own ranks, they still believed that they could convert them to acceptance of a system which they had decisively rejected. There was indeed a certain warrant for their belief that the unmeasured denunciation of Papenism was not quite sincere. The parties, even the Liberal parties, had themselves strained the constitution unduly; Ebert, Stresemann, Brüning had done it; Mueller had been willing to do it. But in each case there had been crisis as an excuse and in each case a free vote had endorsed crisis action. Papen was going much further than any of them. Crisis was still the excuse, but the free vote was ignored and the cause of crisis was represented to be the presence of a free vote system, and permanent

amendment, not temporary suspension, to be the cure. No intelligent person could admit for a moment that the mere legalization of illegality could cure anything; no intelligent person had but admitted that amendment was necessary, but only a tiny minority of intelligent persons saw any argument in favour of sheer retrogression to pre-war systems simply because no really intelligent person, knowing that history never repeats itself, ever believes that retrogression is possible. But the intelligent also saw that the dice were for the moment loaded in Papen's favour; firstly, because apparently nearly one-half of the nation were resolved on the destruction of the constitution and on the erection of a dictatorship in one form or another on the wreck of the democratic system; and secondly, that the other half had not the slightest idea how amendment was to be made. In the circumstances it is not so surprising that quite a number of intelligent persons joined the Papen minority or were sympathetic to it; Bismarckism was better than dictatorship; it was also better than utter negation.

Papen looked for his majority, the majority that was necessary if the constitution were to be constitutionally abolished, to the National Socialists. Despite the vigour of the controversy that soon was raging bitterly, he did not despair of them. But for the moment both loss of temper and natural cunning told him that there was no advantage in compromising. The door for Hitler's submission would remain open; Papen was under no illusions about the leader who never compromised. But at the same time persuasion would for the moment be laid aside for the bludgeon. His tactics were simply to strike blow after blow at the party until Hitler came to his senses and saw salvation in supporting presidentialism. He was confident that the party would lose heavily at the elections; the signs of discouragement and disillusion were all too evident. He shrewdly aided the process by bringing his influence to bear on his industrialist friends; the subsidies to Hitler began to cease. In what was a duel between two personalities Papen had powerful weapons which might be decisive weapons. The election campaign had no other interest than the duel between Hitler and Papen, a duel that concerned less than one-half of the

nation. It is all too significant that about the greater half no observer troubled except those who for one reason or another believed in "the Red peril."

In the ranks of the centre and left parties there was anger, excitement, apprehension, but that was all. With the exception of the Centrum the centre parties had to all intents and purposes ceased to exist, and the Centrum itself, despite its confessional power, had ceased to have power to influence events; the scornful rejection of the implications of its qualified alliance with National Socialism had reduced it to that impotence which the thought of alliance had richly earned. The feud which its leadership was conducting with Papen over Bruening's fall had by now ceased to touch the average party man very deeply. The real strength of the Centrum's opposition had been drawn from South Germany, and even there, although intense suspicion of "Bismarckism" still existed, Papen's vague plans for the abolition of the Prusso-Reich dualism and for greater constitutional independence for the federal states had made a certain impression, while Papen, himself a Centrist, had a shrewd suspicion, if no more, that if he won a victory the Centrists would revert very quickly to supporting the holders of power—on terms. They were by nature a government party and in them Liberal democracy could find only a feeble champion. Their record during the election campaign bore out his view. There was, of course, no doubt that there would be, as a result of it, just as great a majority against Papen as on September 12. The only concern therefore for the Centrist leadership was to prevent Papen from detaching a solid mass of votes from that majority; they must, in other words, foil any attempt on his part to bring Hitler over and divert any inclination on Hitler's part towards an accommodation. They even sought to rally a party front. On October 17 Kaas delivered a slashing attack on the government, ending by declaring that the Centrum seriously and honestly extended a hand to any party willing seriously and honestly to co-operate with it in the creation of an emergency majority *bloc*. The implications were obvious. Although the offer was general—the Centrum always was catholic; it despised no support—it could be directed only to the National

Socialists. No Socialist-National-Socialist co-operation was possible; a Centrist-Socialist co-operation would not produce a majority. The Socialist party gruffly declared that a general anti-Papen front must break down on the ground that any co-operation of themselves for any purpose with the Hitlerites, even for saving the constitution temporarily, was out of the question. The time had gone by when it would have profited the Socialist party to play the queer twisted game of the Centrists; so long as the way to a future co-operation with the Centrum was not permanently blocked they could not but reject all offers of such a kind.

But the curious sequel to their refusal was their further refusal to draw from it the obvious conclusions as to their future action. The fact that they should have recognized was that, with the final declaration by Papen of his intention to restore autocracy, a revolutionary situation was approaching. The Socialists have often been reproached, by people who ought to know better, of failing to restore the unity of the working-class front. The fact was that any such restoration was quite impossible. The schism was unhealed and unhealable. The one basis of restoration was the acceptance by both parties of the common aim of creating the Socialist state. They both avowed that aim as their own and only aim, but there was not the faintest sign of agreement as to the nature of the Socialist state. To the orthodox party, after its lapse to Liberalism, the Marxian dictatorship of the proletariat advocated by the Communists on a class conception was as abhorrent as was the dictatorship of the lower middle-class advocated by Hitler on a national conception; to them the one-party state was a matter of education and evolution, not of imposition by force. Whatever their alleged prophets stood for, the Socialist party stood and could only stand for political liberty; it was at the moment the only party in Germany which did stand for it and that was the fatal disadvantage under which it laboured. Every other party stood by profession for liberty but not for political liberty, and in political liberty as such a majority of the German people was not interested.

On the burning controversy whether or not the presidial system or the democratic system brought the greater prosperity

there was endless controversy and the Socialist party polemicized vigorously enough. There were two things evident enough. The first was that German foreign policy was in ruins; the brilliant prospects held out by the Stresemann policy had not been realized, the magnificent opportunity offered by the victory of The Hague had been thrown away, first, because Curtius was weak and then because Bruening, despite the Lausanne success, had nothing either of Stresemann's comprehension of the situation or his skill in handling it. Both had let the Foreign Office, relieved to be free of the tutelage of Germany's only statesman, manage things as it liked and it liked to manage things after the manner of its blundering, self-isolated, and intriguing predecessors. With Neurath it had at last got the formal acknowledgment of its authority by getting a professional diplomat and one of the weakest and narrowest of the lot into the cabinet. With the Papen regime the revolt from democracy had been successful; the aristocracy once again had in its hands control of foreign policy. And an unholy mess of it they had made, a mess which was to weigh heavily on the Hitlerite regime which added to the mess by contributing the personal blundering of its head. They had made definite the issue Stresemann sought to keep indefinite—equality; they had confused the disarmament with the rearmament issue; they had begun to create that suspicion of aggressive motives that was finally to isolate Germany in a way that she had never been isolated before. What successes Papen had had were filched from Bruening and they were, in any case, negative successes, while the reversion to the policy of alliances that Stresemann had condemned, alike by the stupidity of its conception and the feebleness of its handling, had been found incapable of producing results. Worst of all, they had broken what Stresemann had sought to make the foundation of policy—the solidarity of Western democracy.

In the second place, the whole history of the presidial system had shown that autocracy, armed with all the powers conferred by the emergency decree, had been incapable of achieving a lasting success. The unemployment figures had fallen slightly, it is true, but the recovery of Germany had been nothing like so pro-

nounced as the recovery in other lands. The individual German had no more a feeling of confidence at the end of 1932 than he had in the middle of 1931; in that he differed radically from the average Frenchman and the average Englishman. It was no use blaming other nations, Britain's retreat from gold and acceptance of tariffs, or America's shortage of money; other nations equally exposed to the results of both had yet made progress up from disaster. More, the presidial system under Papen had deliberately placed the effort at recovery on a class basis. Although experts argued vigorously on the sacrifice of agriculture to exports and vice versa, the "big interests" almost unanimously welcomed Papen's schemes in principle, while the aristocracy welcomed in practice his practically unlimited subsidization of the landlords; they recognized that they were an attempt to shift a larger part of the burden on to the shoulders of a privileged working class whose privileges had already become meaningless as a result of unemployment.

On both grounds there was plenty of opportunity for sharp criticism, for an appeal to class interest on the one hand and the spirit of democratic pacifism on the other. When the Socialists said that the policy of the government was a menace alike to peace and to the position of the working class they were perfectly right but perfectly futile, for the majority of the nation cared not one whit either for peace or for the rights of the working class. Along those lines agitation, be it backed ever so strongly by the trade-unions, would not gain a single vote. Unless the agitation could be shifted on to another plane, it would be unavailing.

It was the impossibility for the Socialists to shift it on to another plane that should have made them see the approach of the revolutionary situation. Although the cause of democratic liberty in the abstract left the bulk of the nation cold, the cause of liberty did not. For the moment liberty meant the defeat of Papenism. Now against that system, leaving the Centrists out of it, there were three parties and one movement; whichever party headed revolt—put revolt on its banners and advanced those banners—would rally the movement, that latent revolutionism to which allusion has so often been made. Hitler was resolutely

“legal”; the Communists sternly loyal to their Moscow masters. From neither would there come the liberating decision to fight. This was the supreme chance of the Socialist party, so supreme that it is very doubtful if they would have needed to fight. If their leadership had had but resolution, not indeed to declare by formal proclamation their intention to resist the re-establishment of autocracy; if they had merely let it be seen that they were taking preparations to resist, they would have reaped the benefit of the revolutionism that seethed underneath the apparently rigid party system. It is unfair to defend the Socialist leadership by pointing to the feebleness of the resistance to Hitler’s version of the presidial system. The root cause of the feebleness, apart from personal and party reasons, was the fact that the Left permitted Hitler to retain control of so much of that revolutionism that what was left was impotent. Nor is it fair to judge of the possibilities of resistance by the fact that individuals deserted by their leaders failed to offer resistance.

It is not to be gainsaid that the working class, in the sense of the exploited class—a term which includes much of the lower middle-class if it excludes some of the so-called working class—was by now thoroughly aroused, and that was particularly true of the younger trade-unionists and younger members of the Socialist party. Opposition had stiffened them and the party “toleration” of Bruening had not weakened them. The refusal to “tolerate” Papen, the evidence that the new regime was professedly anti-working class in the sense that it meant to make impossible any working-class organization that might jeopardize the regime, the constant harrying by Communist and National Socialist alike, had ended by turning what was originally passive into aggressive defence. The “Iron Front” was enthusiastic and waiting; the unions were ready to strike; in the confusion and disintegration nothing was wanting but a leader in Germany, who when the moment came could seize it to turn a revolutionary situation into a revolution.

It has been said by some of the stupider men-on-the-spot school who have accepted unquestioningly the feeble excuses of feebler leaders, that strike action was impossible because of the unem-

ployment and the exhaustion of the union funds. The excuse is refuted by the facts that past victories had been won under those handicaps, that there actually was a successful strike a few weeks later, and that the funds and property of the unions were big enough still to paralyse the trade-union leaders for fear of losing them. There was power to act and opportunity to act; there was also will to act, but it had deserted the leadership. The death of Hermann Mueller had deprived the movement of a man who with all his faults and hesitations, his dislike of violence and his respect for constituted, even self-constituted authority, had none the less a sense of reality and a sense of duty. It is possible that he too might have temporized and hedged; it was absolutely certain the others would. The leadership had now largely passed into divided hands. On the one side were the politicians and journalists, mostly tired and sometimes ageing men, long since unaccustomed to action and very largely divorced from the rank and file; on the other the trade union leadership, which took the narrow union view and was willing to temporize with anyone who would respect the existence of the unions and leave untouched their property. Since the day when their opposition to "sacrifice" had brought down the last parliamentary government under their own leader, they had very largely usurped control of policy and had conducted the political fight on narrow economic grounds, making it one of sheer defence of gains won and gradually being lost. It was the sort of fight which does not appeal to the imagination and profoundly irritates those who have no interest to serve by helping to win it and when it became clear that it would never be backed by action it became a pure matter of form into which the participants put no enthusiasm. Yet before that leadership, political and trade union, there were only two courses; either to create a joint political opposition—with the Centrum, with anybody!—to the regime, or to prepare an individual revolutionary opposition. The leadership did neither; it merely like Eli sat on its pillar and trembled for the ark of God with the inevitable result.

To read the *apologiae* and the explanations is to move in an unreal world. Everyone of them is refuted, not merely by logic

but by events. In the period when Hitler's legions, suddenly bereft of their financial resources, reduced in cases to begging in the streets—when disillusioned and despairing they listened to revolutionism—there was an amazing fraternization between Communists and Storm Troopers. The curious story of one of the Ulm officers who, condemned to a fortress because he had propagated National Socialism in the Reichswehr, in his cell studied the wretched propaganda pamphlets that was all either movement could produce, made the not very original discovery that extremes meet, argued with Hitler and, coming to the conclusion that he was a tool of "capitalism," joined the Communist party, has been made the subject of a good deal of writing, but it is not so significant as the fact that for some weeks the gang warfare was almost entirely stopped; and when one remembers that of the gangs a good proportion had no political views at all, but were merely using a uniform the better to conduct banditry, that alone indicates a very definite action of forcible control; that on occasion after occasion Red Front Fighters and Storm Troops ceremonially saluted each other as brothers-in-arms; that even the fiercest opponents of the Red peril found it convenient to stop talking about saving Germany from Communism and had to discuss at least the possibility of saving it from counter-revolution, and finally that for three days joint Communist and National Socialist strike action paralysed Berlin.

These were facts which caused the Communists to rejoice officially but of which they made no use. They could make no use of the opportunity given them by the complete surrender to them by their Socialist colleagues of the leadership of the Socialist and trade union revolutionary elements, by the steady flow of additional voters to them, by the dwindling possibilities of any popular resistance to revolutionism. On the narrowest Leninist point of view, arguing that is from Lenin's practice rather than from his confused theoretical work, the situation was favourable, and was rapidly becoming ideal for a revolutionary attempt. For ten years the Communist leadership had proclaimed itself the natural leaders of such an attempt. In a land where hesitation was the outstanding quality of the leadership anywhere, there was no

saying what a determined leadership might not have achieved. The Communist leadership was indeed determined, but it was determined to do nothing. Into the ideological defence of doing nothing sent from Moscow, there is no need to go any more than there is to refute the astounding theory contradicted by the whole of Bolshevik experience that they had to await the hour when all the counter-revolutionary forces were united and then, but only then, lead the workers to the barricades* or seek to imagine what Lenin would have said to a revolutionary general staff that held it to be authentic Leninism that an orthodox revolution that is abortive is preferable to an unorthodox revolution that succeeds.

The policy of Moscow, the fact that the Communist party in Germany was not a German party and was not there to serve German revolutionary interests, should have been decisive for Socialist action. It is of course true that a well-planned aggressive Communist action might have rallied against it all the forces still latent in the distracted middle classes and driven National Socialism's revolutionary elements into counter-revolution. All the more reason then, surely, that when the situation demanded or was likely to demand such action, the *Socialist* party should have been prepared and resolute to take the lead in it. On the narrowest grounds the party should at least have been prepared, for it was not so much a question of revolutionary seizure of power and certainly not of substituting one form of dictatorship for another, as of preventing the permanent exclusion of the Left not merely from government but even from constitutional opposition. And if one thing was clear it was that no constitutional action could now prevent either. If the method of the counter-revolution was one of a succession of dissolutions till in the end a majority of the deputies constitutionally consented either out of sheer fatigue or as a result of this or that sordid bargaining to support it, then the only solution from the point of view of the Left was

* The insincerity of the whole business is seen in the fact that when the counter-revolutionary forces were united no action was taken because no action had been prepared. As to Moscow's aims, a personal friend was present when a prominent member of the Moscow Foreign Office rushed in with the news of the Reichstag fire and, misled by the National Socialist reports, exclaimed in angry dismay: "The fools have let them get out of hand."

the forcible intervention of a revolutionary movement from either the Left or Right. The effect would be chaos and in that chaos there was the chance, the supreme chance, for the leader and there was no reason why that leader should be Hitler rather than a "Marxist."

It is often said that there never was a revolutionary situation. If one means by that that the existence of a revolutionary situation can only be proved by the fact of a successful revolution, one may perhaps grant that the enemies of action, traitorous or merely pusillanimous, had a case. But the test of a revolutionary situation is not merely that the situation be favourable to revolutionary success, but that it necessitate revolutionary action, whether it be successful or no. That was what differentiated Lenin from Kamenev and Zinovieff, that is what separates the leader who leads and the leader who follows. And that is what separates the great revolutionary movement of Germany, its great Communist movement and its great Socialist party, from the gallant handful of workers who fought it out to the death by the bullet or the garotte in the streets of Vienna. If there is any ground at all for saying that there was no revolutionary situation it is the fact that there was nowhere from the reddest of the Communists to the reddest of the National Socialists any revolutionary leadership.

The revolutionary moment indeed had not yet come, but it was coming and not a single preparation was made to meet it. The Iron Front and the Red Fighting Front had their hierarchies and their staffs; they had neither of them ever thought of issuing instructions or properly organizing their devoted troops.

Yet it was in the shadow of revolution that once again, weary but undaunted, the German voter went to the polls on November 6. There was no formal issue except the endorsement or rejection of Hermann Goering's expert views on Reichstag procedure. The chancellor appealed to the nation to vote above party, but there was nothing else but parties to vote for, and the weary battalions rolled up once again to the booths just as before, except that this time there were more stragglers—the total fell by 3·5 per cent. The result was another overwhelming numerical defeat for the government, but a reasonably great moral victory and a really

significant victory for Papen's tactics. The Right, to which the People's party had adhered for election purposes, did remarkably well. The Nationalists won seventeen seats and the Populists four. The Papen parties together polled close on 11.5 per cent of the votes and increased their seats from fifty-three to seventy-four. The Centrum and Bavarians lost seven seats and the Democrats were reduced to a single member. On the Left the situation was ominous. The Communists had won a striking victory; winning eleven seats they reached the century for the first time, polling 2.4 per cent more than last time to reach 16.9 per cent of the total vote, while the Socialists, polling 20.4 per cent only, 1.2 per cent less, lost twelve seats. But the startling feature of the result was the disaster that had overtaken the National Socialists. Their poll fell from 37.4 per cent to 33.1 and they lost thirty-four seats.

The lessons were obvious, though they were unheeded. Papen's tactics of coercing Hitler by defeating him at the polls had succeeded admirably. The most furious fight during the campaign had been between Nationalists and National Socialists, the ingredients of the "national concentration front." Hitler, deprived of subsidies, had raved against the money lords and the capitalists who preyed like vultures on a dying nation. With a magnificent gesture he had flung all his willing team of hireling economists overboard. "Economic conceptions are the death of national idealism," he had cried, and proceeded to point out that economic conceptions meant bankers and big business, but all that had impressed people on the whole less than his defence of the Potempa murderers and of the sabotage in the Berlin strike, than his timidity and lack of the true revolutionary spirit on August 13. The unimpressed of the one type voted Nationalist, those of the other voted Communist. That was the lesson to the Socialist leadership. There *was* revolutionism in Germany; it was divided, but it was tending to drift to Communism simply because that party called itself distinctly a revolutionary party and Socialist, no less than National Socialist revolutionaries, had "gone red."

The Right was in high spirits; the journalistic self-congratulation of their enemies deceived no one. The Centrist leader declared

that the vote was a crushing defeat for the presidial system. It was indeed a crushing numerical defeat for the supporters of the system, but their numerical defeat did not matter. What did matter was how far Papen had crushed Hitler. The results filled National Socialist headquarters with anger rather than dismay. The leaders had foreseen them; Goebbels had had a steady series of unfavourable reports from his agents and even Hitler had come to the conclusion that this time salesmanship was going to show a barren return. In spite of the fact that the new Reichstag by its composition so prevented the creation of a majority government that Papen had every excuse to carry on, Hitler declared that the Papen cabinet had been decisively rejected, and announced as his motto: "No compromise and no thought of an understanding with these elements." The defiance did not disturb Papen. He had already said that participation in the government was open to any party that shared the government's views; a parties government was something apparently entirely different from, and preferable to a party government. He was still in close touch through Schleicher with Strasser, and Hitler had permitted his lieutenant, who was now with difficulty refraining from triumphant, "I told you so's," to make a curious appeal in the official party paper: "What a symbolic gesture it would be if the President in his person were to be the bridge to the National Socialist Germany of the future."

The nation waited eagerly to see what would happen now. Would Hitler, as looked likely, yield now and what would happen then? Or would he be still defiant and what would Papen do then? Would he meet the Reichstag and invite Hitler to defeat him? And if Hitler accepted the challenge and the government were defeated again, would it go straight into unconstitutionalism or would it break Hitler's spirit at last by successive dissolutions? Or would successive dissolutions play straight into the hands of revolutionism—of the "Red peril." One hundred Reichstag seats; it was indeed a peril now and not less a peril because it was apparently going to be up to a point a constitutional peril. In some anxiety the nation waited while the President solemnly proclaimed a party truce. The stock markets were uneasy;

rumours multiplied; there was another outburst of feud and fighting; Liberal papers began to speak almost tenderly of Papen; the lesser evil they loved in a way that they never loved liberty. But Papen seemed confident and the nation was confident. Then without a word of warning came the news that the government had resigned, and that the President had sent to his late chancellor a signed photograph of himself bearing the inscription, "I once had a comrade."

CHAPTER X

THE EPISODE OF SCHLEICHER AND THE SUBMISSION OF HITLER

THE fall of Papen took the nation by surprise, but it did not surprise the political class who knew the aims and on the whole shared the views of the presidential party. Not even on the Right in those circles from which the Prussian state had drawn for centuries the leaders of its armies was there greater civic courage than was possessed by the despised party leaders. It is, of course, possible to make a reasoned defence of the thesis that it was impossible to restore even the Bismarckian version of autocratic class-rule. It could be pointed out that even under Bismarck the aristocracy, though its representatives ruled the state, was also a political party, not to say a political *fronde*, and that, if Bismarck had felt compelled to bow before the spirit of the nineteenth century by permitting the erection of a sham party system and pretending to govern in co-operation with it, the spirit of the twentieth century must not be outraged by the frank establishment of aristocratic oligarchy. The new Bismarckism, too, must have its sham political basis, but it must go further and have a regulation party political majority. That was Schleicher's view; that was what he meant by a "national concentration front," solid masses of Prussianized voters supporting a government of all the talents drawn from the "Right," through which the aristocracy could go on governing. Cynical the view may have been, but it had gauged very nicely the tendency of the advanced twentieth century to be content with the appearance, and equally the tendency of the twentieth century to demand that the appearance be convincing. To the presidential party, the presidial system in all its nakedness with its "cabinet of barons" and adherents of the aristocratic system, was the ideal system; but it realized that it was, if naked, an anachronism. After long discussion it had selected Hitler to be the clothes, to give the necessary appearance of government being open to all

the classes very much as in the old days the Imperial regime had co-opted men like Dernburg to make the bourgeoisie feel that it might aspire even to cabinet rank. To the plain common sense of Hindenburg this seemed like sheer waste of time and energy; he had been willing to work with parties and politicians but, if his expert advisers and his privy council had decided that in the interests of Germany the parties and politicians must be dropped, then let them be dropped without more ado. The reasons of state why Hitler should be conciliated, cajoled, co-opted, he did not appreciate nor did he want to appreciate. He had had quite enough of the co-option of corporals in the terrible days of November 1918 when it was even to his disciplined soul direly necessary. But to-day like a greater man, he did not see the necessity, and he stuck out stolidly against the co-option of the National Socialist leader. Let him obey orders, whether they were orders for promotion or demotion.

Many of the *émigré* writers, remembering that hard-fought election when the solid phalanxes of Socialists had saved Hindenburg from defeat at the hands of "the Austrian corporal," write with pardonable bitterness of Hindenburg's "treachery," of his betrayal of the democracy which trusted to him for defence. The case written up by men whose talent has been sharpened by hate rests really on the failure to appreciate the fact that the old man had been trained to think simply. Under the republican regime in its hey-day when it had won a series of victories on the international front and under Stresemann's guidance had restored Germany not only to her old status in Europe but had gone far to giving her pride of place in it, he had been a loyal and constitutional servant of the regime which more than once had owed to him something of its triumphs. But when he was convinced by his counsellors that the republican system had broken down and that Germany expected him to do his duty as her head, and govern when her parliamentary rulers had abdicated, he governed. But he was not allowed to govern and whenever he tried to do so, his advisers, who appealed to him constantly to save Germany, told him the country would not stand the particular act of government he contemplated. The country would not stand Mueller

because he was a Socialist; he must save the country from Bruening because he was a Bolshevik; he must accept Papen because Papen would save the country, and then he must accept Hitler because Hitler would save Papen. The parties must be driven from power but the parties were yet necessary for government. Hitler could not be chancellor because he was a party leader, but he must be in the government because his was a subversive party, and there must be a "national concentration front" because democracy had failed, but it must be organized on a democratic basis and rely substantially on its democratic appearance.

There is little wonder that, before the subtleties of his advisers, including his own son who was taking to intrigue with very nearly as much gusto as Schleicher himself, the old man was not only bewildered but angry. But there was a point at which bewilderment had been dissipated and that point had been reached when Hitler stood as his opponent for the presidency. After that, after the many times that he had been told that he himself incarnated national concentration, the arguments of Schleicher on the national necessity of harnessing Hitler to the chariot of the presidial system made no appeal. We have seen him gleefully ruining the fine-spun schemes for getting Hitler into the government, and it is beyond doubt that he highly approved Papen's new tactics. He did not indeed appreciate all the design behind them. But as a soldier he knew that an enemy is never beaten till he is beaten to his knees and his indignation may be imagined when after the first shrewd blow he found his counsellors busily quarrelling over the advisability of delivering the next.

There were personal reasons for the quarrel. Schleicher, who like all serious soldiers despised Papen, found him becoming uncomfortably powerful and well on the way to making the pure presidial system a success. Schleicher knew very well that a pure presidial system was almost impossible even in defeatist Germany, and he was genuinely afraid not of Hitler but of the revolutionism in the National Socialist party, a revolutionism which his confidant, Strasser, was never tired of emphasizing. Before him there hung the awful vision of the presidial experiment ending in an

aristocratic regime supported by the bayonets of the Reichswehr identified with class interests and detested by the vast majority of the nation. He did not admire the leaders of the parties but he was not yet convinced of their total pusillanimity, and he was worked on by Strasser, who not only terrified him by accounts of the difficulty which Hitler was having in restraining his men, but could now point to the definite fact of the drift of National Socialists to Communism. That there was danger there is no doubt, but it was never so serious as he represented it to be, and it did not supply any real argument against trying the Papen policy of punishing the National Socialist leader for his own and the national good. From the point of view of the presidential party Papen's was the only policy that could give results or at least the result that they wanted, and that was the subordination of National Socialism to the presidial system, a subordination that was only a question of time.

Papen was not popular with his colleagues; they were easy to persuade. But he was popular with the President who entirely approved his policy and curiously enough, until one remembers the simplicity of the old soldier-mind, trusted him. The presidential party united in pointing out to the President that the "personal" quarrel between Hitler and Papen was preventing the construction of the "national concentration front" now—after the Communist successes and the unrest in the docile trade-union ranks—more vitally necessary than ever. There was now, they pointed out, only a choice between getting the National Socialists into the government and turning the system of government based on the President as constitutional head of the state to one of government based on the President as head of the Reichswehr.

Personal dislikes flared up; the dispute was long and bitter until Papen saw that he was bound to be overborne. He could govern against Hitler but he could not govern against his own colleagues. Bitterly angry but concealing his wrath, he declared his willingness to resign if his resignation would lead to the desired result; as he knew it would not, the sincerity of his abdication may be doubted. There remained only the President to convince,

and that was not so easy. But in face of Papen's attitude of martyrdom for the good of the nation Hindenburg, not required to be a martyr himself but merely to countersign the martyrdom of another, gave way with an ill-grace that boded no good to those who had persuaded him. Those who talk of treachery on the part of the President to loyal servants forget that he rarely failed to take revenge on those who demanded "treachery" of him as his duty to his country. Schleicher had made a bitter enemy of the President at last.

The cabinet announced that it had resigned because as a result of consultations with the President it had felt that in the interests of the "national concentration" and in the national interests it was best that it should free the President's hands by placing in them its collective resignation. The adjective deceived no one. Not the cabinet but Papen had fallen, and there was instantly a revulsion of feeling in the country. "He quits office with honour," said the greatest Liberal paper in Germany. There was jubilation on the Left and among the Centrists, but amid the jubilation was no little apprehension. What was to come; what could come next?

When he took leave of the President as resigning chancellor Papen had tried to outline the situation. He pointed out that the original aim of the presidial system had been to make possible a coalescence of the "national" forces to form a strong Conservative government with a majority in the country—to say the least of it a remarkably ingenuous summing-up of Schleicher's tortuous intriguing. That object had not been attained; so far from coalescing, the "national" forces were in greater disarray than ever. But the election had been a great victory for the cause of national concentration, for the setback to Hitler had strengthened the moderate wing of his party and no less a person than Strasser, once the author of a wildly Socialist oration in the Reichstag, was now convinced that the way of salvation for his party was to ensure concentration and enter the cabinet on the terms laid down. Indeed, judging by the comments elsewhere, concentration might have even broader bases and become not merely a concentration of the Right but a concentration of the Right and

Centre. To that greater concentration he himself was an obstacle because of the personal antagonism to him both of the Centrum and of National Socialism. He therefore had dropped out, but he would be abler as a detached observer to give the President the benefit of his counsel. His immediate counsel was that the President should put aside personal feelings and invite Hitler to discuss the situation.

The immediate counsel was good, but the position of the counsellor was anything but pleasing to the presidential clique. It was in fact that of an unofficial chancellor. Cuning had once more outwitted intelligence. The presidential clique could afford to quarrel—no aristocratic clique could help quarrelling—but it could not afford to split. It could deprive Papen of nominal, but it could not deprive him of real power. His advice still outweighed theirs, and thus it came about that, if not in presence at least in spirit, Papen again stood behind the President's chair. The interview—there were two, on November 19 and 21—was much more cordial than the last; the President graciously allowed Hitler to be seated. Hitler was in a much less Wagnerian mood and falling in with it the President dropped the rôle of scolding adjutant and became paternal. Having allowed Hitler to suggest his own chancellorship as a solution of the cabinet crisis he began to ask questions. Suppose he entrusted Hitler with the formation of a cabinet, would he agree to take over, as the cabinet's, a "presidential" economic programme?—this was a safeguard against "national Bolshevism" *à la* Bruening of which the National Socialist orators were the most vicious propagandists. Would he refuse to restore the old Prussia-Reich dualism?—this kept Papen, still Commissary for Prussia, in control of that key state. Would he maintain intact Article 48 of the Weimar constitution?—this left the President free to dismiss the cabinet. Would he submit the list of ministers for presidential approval and abide by the presidential decision?—this effectively prevented a purely Hitlerite cabinet; and last of all, would he agree to the presidential nominations to the Ministry of Defence and to the Foreign Office?—this prevented adventures in foreign policy and National Socialist control of the army.

He regretted that these were essentials—they were placed before Hitler in writing—on which no discussion could be permitted. As he emphasized them point by point and insisted on a categorical affirmative, the President grew almost genial—he was extracting what enjoyment he could out of the interview—and more paternal than ever as he bade Hitler go home and think it over. Hitler had come in no optimistic mood; he went home in a state of acute depression, to be plunged once again into angry quarrels. To accept such conditions was to stultify not only the proud defiance of weeks, to give the lie to the legend of the “no surrender” general, to strike at the loyalty and cohesion of the movement he had attached to himself as dictator *in posse*, but to give up at once personal ambition and the ideals of the party. Not indeed that the latter mattered much, but they were essentials to the foundation on which the realization of ambition could be built. He saw the arguments on both sides and as usual found himself unable to make a decision. In the minds of his lieutenants policy and ambition were equally at odds. Strasser who not only was convinced of the necessity of surrender but knew himself a certain nominee for office urged acceptance strongly. The progress made since the last interview was very real. The chancellorship was now offered. The mere acceptance of it would satisfy the party and rally the doubters. He was reinforced by nearly all the stalwarts of the party including Roehm, and bitterly opposed by Goering and Goebbels. It was the old dispute over again, reinforcement of the old arguments. The Leader—the man of quick decisions—hesitated pitifully; to gain time he asked for more light. He professed to find a certain contradiction in the President’s exposition. Did the President have in his mind a parliamentary or a presidial cabinet; if the latter what would be his own personal position as head of the greatest party in the state?

The reply betrayed skilled hands at work. The President saw no contradiction at all. A presidial cabinet was one in which the Chancellor did not consider himself a party leader nor think the cabinet exclusively party property. A parliamentary cabinet was one that reposed on a Reichstag majority. A presidial cabinet supported by a Reichstag majority was a parliamentary cabinet

and yet at the same time it was not—an ideal type of cabinet. Hitler, if he became chancellor would become so as the President's nominee, not as the leader of the greatest party in the state, and as the President's nominee he could use his position as the leader of the greatest party in the state to negotiate a majority which was desirable simply to avoid defeats and dissolutions. The President reminded him that in their cordial talk Hitler had begun by claiming the chancellorship as a *party* right and had assured the President that he could find a parliamentary majority for himself. If that were so, then everything was well. The presidential cabinet would be perfectly constitutional and, though that was not added, completely at the mercy of the President.

The revelation was a nasty one. The championship of dictatorship, the prophet of all or nothing, was revealed as ready to negotiate for a majority as servilely as a Marxist politician. Strasser saw the danger, heard the murmurs of disillusion in the party, and begged the Leader to take the chancellorship. That was the essential; Reichschancellor Adolf Hitler were magic words of salvation. He could argue afterwards from the lofty eminence to which acceptance would carry him. But Hitler would not listen. He was well embarked on a hair-splitting argument and he wanted to continue it.

Back went his answer, a long and verbose composition which reveals even after the severe overhauling it got from more intelligent subordinates, all the heavy painfulness of his mental processes. He felt that the President's definition of a presidential cabinet was not compatible with the accepted definition of a parliamentary cabinet; he was all for democracy now, all for the tyranny of the parties. Besides, the President was not fair to a loyal subject. What other chancellor had ever had his liberty so straitly circumscribed? Surely the President still recognized that the situation of Germany—he called it catastrophic, hardly a tactful summing-up of the results of two years' presidential government—demanded that the chancellor have full powers. The parties were not so willing as the President supposed to support him, so his envoy Goering now reported in clumsy repudiation of his former confidence. He

could but agree with his colleagues, a curious confession on the part of the Leader who had declared that "I and I alone" will decide, that in its present form the offer must be refused. He proposed an alternative. Let the President accept from him a list of ministers which would include Schleicher at the Defence Ministry and Neurath at the Foreign Office. The President, having approved the list, would then appoint him chancellor and entrust him with full powers such as had not been refused to any parliamentary chancellor in a time of crisis. It is sad to reflect that among the contributors to this astounding document was General Kurt von Schleicher. But the general knew that it was not written only to convince the President; it was also addressed to his lieutenants in the hope of reconciling the hostile factions. It failed in both objects, and its chief effect was to convince those who read it that the National Socialist party was already in a state of dissolution.

That the President, though he left the official composition of the letters to Meissner, enjoyed it all, goes without saying. His answer found no difficulty in turning Hitler's logic against him. It repeated the statement that Hitler had said that he thought he could arrange for a majority. It declared courteously but firmly that the President could not surrender his full powers to the leader of a party which had always claimed exclusive power and which had taken up an attitude of hostility to himself personally and to the measures which he had deemed necessary. He feared that a cabinet led by Hitler would lead to a party dictatorship and to an extraordinary intensification of the antagonisms within the nation—a masterly judgment which deserved to be made the corner-stone of the presidential policy. It was now clear that Hitler refused any kind of co-operation with or in a true presidial cabinet. In the circumstances, therefore, the President thought it unprofitable to continue the discussions, and with an irony of which the tough old warrior was quite incapable but whose delicacy he was well able to savour, the letter closed with the assurance that at any time when Hitler felt inclined to be more accommodating the door stood open, and that at all times the President would be glad to have his opinion on the questions of the day.

The publication of the correspondence was a deadly stroke at Hitler. The blow administered at the elections had been mercilessly followed up. The nation knew now that the Leader had made a demand and had had it blandly but definitely refused. The effect on himself was shattering; a last definite desperate attempt to recover lost ground had failed. The courtesy of the "open door" only emphasized the fact that it had been slammed shut more loudly than ever.

The effect on the party was hardly less devastating from the Leader's point of view. While the rank and file received the fresh disaster with dazed incredulity, each warring faction of the leadership found in the new situation complete confirmation of its views. Both recognized the seriousness of the blow alike to the party and the Leader's prestige in it especially at a time of financial crisis. But while Goering and Goebbels held that it proved their contention and that the effect could only be wiped out by a confident lead to the party with "All by any means" as motto, their opponents, equally holding their contention proved, urged the necessity of taking advantage at once of the "open door." The former besought him to accept the challenge implicit in the reference to dictatorship, and to revert boldly to the traditional policy of the party; the others besought him to give swift proof that nothing was further from his thoughts than either "putsch" or dictatorship.

Although the rival leaders had in the course of the last months completely changed their positions, they still each of them had a good deal of sense on their respective sides. The real difference was that Goebbels, propaganda expert, looked to the nation while Strasser, true politician, looked to the party. The former thought to retrieve the position by carrying the nation with them; the latter by enabling the party as soon as possible to have more to occupy its thoughts than the attempt to reconcile the Messianic, unflinching hero of its dreams with an insignificant little party leader negotiating for the power he and the party claimed for him as incarnating the true Germany in terms such as no ordinary party leader would have dared to use. In the eyes of the public the great movement that was Germany now stood revealed as

just another German party with a factious party committee and a leader who was not allowed to lead. The National Socialist revolution was dead; the difference between Goebbels and Strasser was simply in the method adopted to dispose of the corpse. Between the factions Hitler found no difficulty in maintaining himself. They were too evenly balanced to make him fear revolt and, with either faction claiming to have proved its point, he felt that, if prestige had suffered, authority was unimpaired. But if Goebbels felt that he had won because Hitler was now so persuaded of the evils of negotiation as to be stubborn against the President's offer, Strasser realized to the full that the imagined victory was defeat unless the legend of success was recovered. At all costs before a third blow fell—he had at last realized the secret of the presidential tactics—somehow, somewhere, distracting success must be won and it could not now be won by mass action—unlike Goebbels, he believed the masses were escaping. If the party got tangible evidence that National Socialism was still a power in the land, if Hitler could show it that he possessed real power of some kind no matter on what terms he got it, the position might be saved. Disappointed, harassed, in a state of nervous exhaustion, and utterly at sea in the world of high intrigue where honest men were tricked to their doom, Hitler promised Goebbels that the watchword would be, "No compromise with the presidential system," and at the same time authorized Strasser to take what steps he could to make any sort of compromise possible.

Strasser at once got into touch with Schleicher. The general welcomed him as a godsend. The presidential clique was nearly as much a bear-garden as the National Socialist committee. The President, charmed at the way in which he had got rid of the detested Hitler, turned cheerfully to his beloved Papen; to him there was now no objection to Papen's quiet return to power and his indignation is comprehensible when he found all sorts of objections raised. Papen had avenged his fall only too thoroughly, by wrecking all hopes of a "national concentration," at least for the moment. It was he who had seen to the method of Hitler's rebuff, he who had guided the presidential pen; he had clearly more friends around the President than the others had thought.

With Hitler thrown back once again into opposition, Schleicher saw the situation infinitely worse, because he saw no solution of the difficulty but to revert to Papen's policy of governing without a majority and by dissolution. He was at his wit's end to suggest an alternative both to that policy and its exponent, and in his anger he accused Papen of maliciously bungling the whole business. It was easy for Papen to refute the charge; the President had taken no step without consulting wise counsellors; would any of their critics have advocated the granting of full powers to Hitler? Did any of them believe that the presidential power could survive such a surrender? The discussion became heated and violent words were used on both sides. But Papen was clearly so far in the right that Schleicher saw that new arguments would have to be found if he were to be kept from returning to office. It was at that point that Strasser came to him.

His visitor was perfectly frank up to a point. He represented Hitler as seriously disturbed by the President's failure to trust him, but as seriously desiring to co-operate with him. He had felt that it would be undignified for the leader of the greatest party—the pure patriotism of whose aims was undoubted—to accept the chancellorship under conditions which threw doubts on the purity and made the aims almost impossible of realization. Nor could he support a cabinet obviously formed against the party and prepared, as Papen apparently was, to deal firmly with it as a menace to the state. He felt that he had been unfairly treated, and that the men responsible for keeping him from power were a selfish Nationalist clique who demanded subordination that he as the Leader could not give and remain the Leader. But if it could be made clear to the public that as far as the Leader was concerned there was no question of subordination, he would consider participation, though not, of course, personal participation, in a cabinet which was “national, presidial, and parliamentary,” if it did not contain his personal enemies; it must not be led by Papen and it must have an adequate proportion of National Socialists in it.

A good deal of that was simply untrue. Strasser had no power to commit Hitler to anything, but he counted on being able to

convince him if he returned with a success to confirm it. He carefully misrepresented the situation in the party and his leader's reactions to it, a misrepresentation that was pardonable because no one yet knew what final form these reactions would take. But Schleicher who had his own means of checking information and who knew his ambition, could not but see that he was sincere, and underneath the phrases catch the fear lest evidence of success in the shape of a cabinet victory of some sort would come too late to prevent the party from realizing the extent to which it was failing to win. Nor was Schleicher too critical of his visitor. He could use him admirably to defeat Papen. The latter had ruined the policy of harnessing National Socialism; Strasser's bid for a cabinet seat enabled Schleicher to pose as the man who found the way at the last moment to create the national front, or if not *the* national front at least a national front, and also to show that its creation was conditional on the exclusion of Papen from the resulting cabinet.

The only difficulty was that there still remained the problem of the chancellor. Schleicher was, as we know, not without ambition, but he really did not want the chancellorship. He much preferred, as responsible head of the army, to be a power behind the scenes, and he knew that a Schleicher chancellorship would be interpreted as, and would in a sense be, a military dictatorship. Some of his military colleagues, all of whom distrusted Papen for old times' sake, with unexpected insight into the future saw conditions arising that would make a military rule inevitable in some form or another and they urged Schleicher to accept responsibility now. He was half convinced, was already beginning his agile weaving of webs, but he still hesitated. Kaas investigated at the President's request the possibilities of Reichstag support for a presidial cabinet headed by a Centrist, but had to report failure. Strasser's rivals in the party, scenting the possible conspiracy and fearing its outcome, took the chance to rouse the suspicion of the Leader and an ominous article appeared in the party organ, declaring that the party would not tolerate a Schleicher cabinet. The President turned to Papen once again, but that nobleman spared Schleicher the effort to prove once again that

he was impossible. He declared to the President that he was impossible, and the President turning on Schleicher as the man who had caused all the mischief ordered him to take the chancellorship. He was formally appointed on December 2.

The President lost no time in showing the new chancellor that he did not possess the presidential confidence. When he asked for the same guarantees against the Reichstag—that is, an order for that body's dissolution as Papen had received—he was refused and was told to justify confidence by results. The first thing to do was to form the cabinet and to inform the President fully on the precise degree to which National Socialism was committed to support the cabinet and which individual members of the party were to participate. This was a nasty question which the chancellor was spared from answering.

If he had any real belief that he had solved the difficulty he was to be disillusioned with savage suddenness. Under the arrangement come to, Strasser was to be minister of the interior and two or three seats were to go to his colleagues. Feeling that he had accomplished a great task, he telegraphed to the Leader recruiting in the Bavarian uplands, a full account of his success and urged him to return at once to Berlin and as Leader haughtily settle details himself; admittedly there were many to be settled. What happened we do not know. Hitler left Munich to go by train to Berlin; at Weimar—ominous name—he left, returned to Munich, and telegraphed to Strasser repudiating the whole arrangement. The excellent newspaper story which tells how, hearing late what was afoot and what had been carefully concealed from them, Goebbels and Goering got the fastest car they could, headed off the Leader at Weimar, literally kidnapped him in his pyjamas, and bore him back, cold but complacent to Munich, is unfortunately not supported by documentary evidence. But whatever the staging of the victory, the other faction had won; not indeed that they had convinced the Leader of the wrongness of Strasser's policy as that his own nature saw the shadow of Strasser grow and increase—Reichsminister Strasser; Regierungsrat Hitler. He saw Strasser not as a loyal if argumentative subordinate but as a cunning rival. Deliberately he deluded him

into believing that he had his confidence the more easily to destroy him. The great plan was in ruins, but Hitler was quite pleased.

The unexpected repudiation of an agreement which Strasser had believed he had had a right to make, came as a heavy blow to Schleicher who saw all his hopes of a national front gone. Strasser, conscious of the excellence of his case, however one looked at it, and knowing that he had a powerful following, fought hard for his point but soon saw that he would not win; the Leader had decided to destroy him. On December 8 he resigned all his party appointments and went off ostensibly on indefinite leave back to civil life. In his letter of resignation he bitterly criticized the official party policy. The reaffirmation of the formula, "All or nothing" was, he declared, likely to lead to ruin. It had cost the party two severe setbacks, setbacks much more severe than the actual figures suggested, and two presidential rebuffs which had made it ridiculous in the eyes of the nation and gravely weakened party solidarity. So long as the Leader was content to follow the advice of the irresponsible Goering-Goebbels clique and neglect the advice of its able and intelligent wing, the National Socialist party, under Hitler's leadership, was condemned to sterile and barren opposition and so to ultimate ruin. On the facts he was perfectly correct. The refusal to grant Hitler all power was categorical; there was not then the slightest hope that it would be reversed. There were therefore two alternatives as had long been plain to the realists—either to compromise or to fight. The latter meant rebellion, illegality, and Hitler had definitely banned its adoption. Strasser himself, though, unlike his leader he was a fighter by temperament, realized clearly that if the nation became convinced that the party was pursuing a policy of mere negation like the bourgeois parties, or was simply awaiting the Messianic moment like its rival the Communists, it would be revealed to all men as a party with a leadership devoid of all sense of reality; the patent medicine of Hitlerism would be recognized as coloured water. All this was true but it was not the point at issue. The real issue was not whether the party which, thanks more to Strasser than to any other single individual, had risen from literally nothing to be the strongest party in the state was

to take this or that policy, but whether Strasser was to decide the party policy. The decisive factor in the savage intrigues that went on unknown to the rank and file was Hitler's personal decision that Strasser was dangerous to his personal rule. That enabled intrigue to triumph over intelligence. Strasser's letter of resignation only anticipated disciplinary expulsion.

There is no evidence that Strasser wanted to split the party. He knew it too well to believe that a real split was possible. For a moment he may have believed that his influence was so great that the weight of party opinion would enable him in the end to triumph over his personal enemies, but he cannot with his intelligent appraisal of his colleagues ever have believed that sufficient would follow him to let him possess a party of his own. Unless that party was big enough to make the Hitlerite wing become the rump, it was as useless as the pathetic little party which his equally but sooner disillusioned brother had formed, and that was impossible.

And there was no split. The boosting of the Leader had been much too well done, even by Strasser himself, for the revolt of a subordinate leader who had carefully not been boosted to strike the party imagination and the moment the breach was open most of the Strasser group hastily changed their views. With the few malcontents Hitler reckoned promptly. Frick, threatened with expulsion, collapsed at once; Feder curiously enough held out longer than any of them, but in the end he too submitted to the same threat. A conference of leaders from all over the country was immediately held in Berlin, at which Hitler had yet another opportunity to play the pathetic part which he played so well because he so genuinely enjoyed playing it. It is when he is pathetic that Hitler most believes in his own acting. The fall of Strasser had created consternation among the local leaders everywhere who were not acquainted with the intriguing at headquarters and regarded Strasser's loss as extremely serious. Hitler raised the issue at once into the personal sphere. With hardly a word on party policy, he described pathetically how he had trusted Strasser only to find he had nourished a viper in his bosom. Strasser's end had been that of a disloyal friend; his

defeat, the defeat of a conspiracy against the Leader. With real tears coursing down his cheeks he appealed to the audience not to desert him, not to wound the generous heart by fresh revelations of ungrateful treachery. In this mood Hitler was irresistible. Those who had come to a searching inquest remained to mingle their tears with his. The meeting unanimously endorsed all that the Leader had done. Not more than a handful out of 22,000,000 voters followed Strasser into the wilderness of useful and productive occupation. The meeting concluded that the party was once more united behind the Leader, which was true; they also concluded that the meeting had settled the future policy of the party, which was quite untrue. On this point Schleicher was a much shrewder observer than were the minor chiefs of the party.

At any rate he was not perturbed. He may have been a little disappointed at Strasser's complete failure but he did not regard the result as final. Few men in Germany appraised Hitler so accurately as did the general; he knew that already Hitler was wrestling with fresh doubts alike of his policy and his victorious subordinates and that the hour of negotiation would come again. There are plenty of stories but no real evidence of any independent offer to Strasser, or of an endeavour to split the Nazi party. Strasser outside the party was no use to the general and he had never had the slightest hope that Strasser would ever attract sufficient adherents of his own to make rebellion significant or the rebels worth regarding as a factor in politics. As a matter of fact Strasser never made the slightest endeavour to lead a rebellion. He had been on the whole singularly loyal to Hitler; the *fronde* had been against him, not made by him, and he had bowed to the opposition the moment the Leader had identified himself with it. But the incident was a gain to Schleicher in the sense that it did militate against the importance of the Nazi party. Its opposition would not be nearly so formidable after the upheaval, and in the Reichstag to which the general attached more importance than did Papen it would be deprived of its most formidable orator. More skilful as a demagogue, the venomous Goebbels was not to be compared for a moment with Strasser

as a political leader. His most serious parliamentary enemy had been crippled.

Right at the beginning came a stroke of good luck. Neurath from Geneva announced that the principle of German equality in armaments had been finally conceded. It was true that the success meant very little practically, but it appealed sentimentally to the nation and the new cabinet reaped a certain benefit of it in prestige. But it came too late. To the nation the foreign issue had for long been *chose jugée*; what interested it much more passionately was the control of power at home. The presidial cabinets had at least brought reality into politics, even if what was real had ceased very largely to be the same as what was important.

On December 6 the chancellor met the new Reichstag. It was in anything but a bellicose mood, but the general party alignment against the cabinet had created a curious parliamentary unity which was not without its effect. It fell this time to the junior party of youth to supply a temporary chairman—the eighty-eight-year-old General Litzmann who delivered himself of a propaganda effort which was anything but sparing of the President. The elections to the official posts went according to plan, Goering once again becoming Speaker, but the National Socialists showed their hand by refusing to vote for a Nationalist deputy-speaker; it suited Hitler's book to emphasize the breach between the extremists of the Right and official Nationalism from the President downwards.

With one or two changes it was simply the old cabinet over again and under the new head it conducted itself towards parliament with tender consideration. Strasser's fall had not discouraged the chancellor; he was going now to build up a Reichstag, but not necessarily a party, majority, and in that majority Strasser whom he had got the President to receive, might play his part later. Now the multiplicity of his contacts showed its use. He talked to trade union leaders; he talked to Socialist politicians; he talked to Centrists; he talked to East Prussians; he talked to South Germans. In the end he felt that he could expect the benevolent neutrality of the bourgeois parties and toleration by the Socialists. He did not fear Goering; that gentleman was

already in touch with him negotiating; in a cabinet reshuffle he hoped to take the place that Strasser might have filled. For most practical purposes he had his majority, but on a direct vote of confidence the parties would no doubt troop as obediently out against him as they had against Papen. It is characteristic of him that he alone conceived the idea of building up a majority not round a party or coalition but round a definite programme. It was not a bad programme for Schleicher had an open mind and clever friends; it was stated not to parliament first but to the nation by wireless. Very largely it was a modification of Bruening's and what appealed to everyone was the decision in it to impose no new taxes while the decision to maintain existing allowances and subsidies certainly appealed to a majority. He was going to make a determined effort, he said, to create employment and he was going to stand no nonsense from the bankers. He would see that for that purpose communes and municipalities got aid for approved schemes. He proposed to acquire 800,000 acres in the eastern provinces for land settlement purposes. Measures would be taken to protect the farmer without causing hardship to the consumer. Further cuts in wages were stated to be undesirable; winter aid was promised to the unemployed and to the working class generally by compulsory price-fixing, and if need be price-cutting, of essential foodstuffs. Certain of the less popular decrees already put into operation would be withdrawn.

There was something about the programme and the manner in which the general delivered it that did inspire a certain confidence. It was certainly very much a pill to cure an earthquake if Hitler was right and the situation in Germany was "catastrophic," but it was sensible, free from mysticism and not frankly a class programme. It did not arouse enthusiasm—the nation's capacity for enthusiasm was now strictly limited—but it was interesting. It is curious to contrast the hostility of the party press from that of the National Socialists to that of the Communists with the attitude of the ordinary citizen. While they fulminated against a general and a uniform and promised the fiercest opposition, the mere thought of a uniform gave the average decent citizen a sense of security against the reign of

terror to which he had been so often subjected. The National Socialists' persecution of Jews and Marxists had already begun, but it was sporadic; there were the Communists, Socialist guards, the denunciations of the clergy, and the police to divert their attention. It was not yet impossible in Germany for a man to get protection and justice, and the thought of the Reichswehr in control made both seem more likely. With the parties more or less bitterly all against him Schleicher enjoyed much more popularity than many foreign observers were willing to admit. But he knew it was a negative popularity; it lay with him to turn it into a positive popularity and he felt that, given the continued support of authority, he could do so.

The hostility of the parties he could afford to neglect for none of them dared do anything. The Communists were still under the spell of their electoral victory, too triumphant even to organize had their leadership tried to force organization upon them. The National Socialists were quiescent; they confined themselves to preaching undying hostility and to hinting at the dark deeds they would do "after Christmas." It is affecting to see unlovely fanatics failing to resist the holiday spirit. One political figure alone gave him trouble. Hugenberg, who, seeing in the rift in the presidential party the chance of another profitable split in the ranks of the Right, was doing his best to widen it. But the gentlemen of the Herrenklub also appeared imbued with the Christmas spirit and, like Hitler, willing to wait.

And so a strange and momentous year dragged to its close. All the achievements of ten years had crumbled away. Outside the frontiers prosperity was slowly returning. Not that other nations had not their problems and their crises; but they were facing them; Germany was facing nothing; the whole state of the land reminded visitors of the state of things in the summer of 1918, a state of dull hope liable at any moment to topple into the ruins of despair. The shadow of revolution, the revolution of the desperate, was over the land, and no one knew from which quarter it would come or who would swell its ranks. There was literally political chaos under the appearance, still maintained, of an ordered state, and behind the political appearance an economic

reality that made men tremble; for if Papen's experts had been correct in their prophecy, they had not foreseen that the effort that was needed if their prophecy was to be realized was not being made. Instinctively the nation turned, as Germany has always turned, to the soldier.

Schleicher faced the new year confidently enough. He was a careful listener and a good observer, and he felt that if he could hold out in the way that he had helped to prevent Bruening and Papen holding out, the mere instinct of self-preservation would rally support to him. If only his enemies did not combine, and he did not believe they could. The Communist victory had given Hitler his cue; once the Strasser episode was liquidated he reappeared as the saviour from the Red peril and the civil war in miniature raged more savagely than before. Here was a situation for the strong hand for he regarded neither party as so formidable as it had been six months ago. He realized that whatever the political prejudices or convictions of the individual, Germany would rally to the strong man who, having power, used it courageously according to his lights for the common good. There was no other to seize power; the revolutionaries had no intention of seizing it; the other parties swayed there and to in fatal irresolution, that irresolution that affected every department of the national life, except the press from whose columns one might have gathered that a violent, if rather neurasthenic, party strife was going on, waged by a plethora of strong men who were only restrained from saving their country by excess of modesty. There were strong men. But they were not modest; they were just bankrupt. On New Year's Day the strong man *par excellence*, Regierungsrat Hitler, issued not a hysterical but a philosophic manifesto. He said that National Socialism was not a party; it was a *Weltanschauung*, a conception of life. Even in Germany verbiage has its value as a psychological pointer; when a party begins to drivel about conceptions of life it is very far from doing anything so practical as making a *coup d'état*, and when it talks about its significance for the future it is always distinctly un-hopeful about the present. From ideologies and *Weltanschauungen* Schleicher had nothing to fear.

And yet these holidays were the days when the trap was laid. So confident was he that he forgot that the doctrine of eternal vigilance applies even more to one's friends than one's enemies. He was too wrapped up in his schemes for the co-operation of all men of goodwill, too fascinated by his discovery of the difference between the party viewed as a collection of very varied electors and the party viewed as an ambitious leadership and by the parallel discovery that the elector of one party is very like the elector of any other party, too intent on his brave plan to neglect the necessity of a majority in parliament and to base himself on powerful and unmistakable backing in the country, to pay attention to what his own class were doing. With them he thought himself safe and that was where one of the cleverest politicians in Germany made his fatal mistake. Only a man over-confident to the verge of foolhardiness could have so forgotten the past as to revive the policy of land reform which had brought down Bruening.

In the holiday season in their Berlin homes, in the Herrenklub, on their estates, his class discussed the programme he had so cheerfully announced, and they came to the conclusion that he was attacking the interests of his class. They could have forgiven him the right to boast of himself as "the social general," as it pleased him to be called, for a policy of social justice affected mainly the industrialists, but when he became the land-reforming general he sealed his death warrant. The silence of the Right on his famous broadcast did not mean what he thought it meant, acquiescence; it meant conspiracy. Big business and the landed aristocracy leagued themselves to destroy him.

The conspirators found a ready agent, allied to each of them, the man he had dethroned—Papen, who under a smiling exterior nursed a deadly grudge. He welcomed the mission; it was one after his own heart. To the astonishment of the tearful, philosophic Hitler facing ruin, his apparently deadly enemy got into touch with him through an agent who was welcome as the flowers in spring, the Cologne banker Schroeder through the books of whose firm the subsidies from the heavy industries used to pass to the coffers of National Socialism. On January 4, having put *Wel-*

tanschauungen resolutely behind him, he met Papen in Schroeder's office. He was in anything but a fighting mood for Strasser's loss had hit him much harder than he had let appear. As was his wont, having got rid of a rival he immediately began to think more favourably of his policy. He realized just as clearly as Strasser the need for doing something positive, something that would impress upon the party that it was making progress. It could not perpetually live on rebuffs and the oratory of Goebbels. Papen therefore found him in a much less Napoleonic frame of mind than he had feared. For the immediate relief by Schroeder of the debt burden on the party funds, he accepted in principle the sharing of power, but he would not commit himself to defining the proportions. He insisted on the chancellorship and to this Papen consented, but beyond Papen's own consent he had got little further. There was no need for him to hurry his decision, and one strong reason for delay. A local election was in progress in the tiny state of Lippe; if he could win a spectacular success here he would be in an infinitely stronger position when it came to discuss finally the terms of the sharing of power. With a solid cash gain he went off on the last of his oppositional propaganda tours. Papen, however, was not ill-content. The cash bargain was a solid enough weapon in his hands and for the moment he was content to let the cunning petty bourgeois feel that he had scored again over the simple "aristo."

No secret was made of the interview and Schleicher read its warning without perceiving the real significance of it. He thought it was little more than a private intrigue of Papen's, and in the language of the barracks he regarded Papen as "a complete washout."* But it implied clearly that he must regard Hitler now as definitely in the ranks of his personal enemies—the distinction between personal and political enemies in the last days of the Republic is hard to draw and is persistently confusing. He therefore intensified his efforts towards reaching agreement with the Left. On January 7 he had an interview with Otto Braun, ostensibly in an endeavour to bring some order into the affairs of Prussia of which Braun was still apparently legally Premier, while

* The term which he is alleged to have used is *Hausewurst*.

Papen still called himself Reichs Commissioner, and which was actually governed by a few *ad hoc* officials. What exactly transpired we do not know; we can conjecture from the fact that Braun was an official Socialist leader that he gave the general very little encouragement.

On January 11 the blow fell. In the press there appeared a violent manifesto by the Landbund against the government whom it accused of robbery and spoliation on account of its settlement policy in the East. It was followed by a demand for an interview with Hindenburg which was granted on the following day, and was the public sequel to four weeks' incessant intrigue. Hindenburg did not care for Schleicher, who had destroyed Bruening, Groener, and Papen. He respected an ability which was so foreign to his own and a lively patriotism, but he did not like the general nor had ever forgiven him. That he disapproved of his land policy was inevitable, but his disapproval was not nearly so fundamental as had been represented, and he was still as opposed as ever to calling Hitler to power. Had Schleicher been a personal favourite, the old man would probably have been just enough and obstinate enough to rebuff the conspirators. But Schleicher had not been his friend but his son's, and when that son turned against the general and with all the enthusiasm of the new rich became the foremost champion of the Landbund and of private property, the President with some reluctance but with conviction, went over to the side of the Bund. But he was still unconvinced about Hitler, and it was only after the Cologne meeting that his advisers could convince him that they had "the Austrian corporal" in such toils as would render him harmless. The manifesto came out with the approval of the President; the interview merely dotted the i's; it was the end, not the beginning of the intrigue.

The blow was entirely unexpected though, after Bruening's experience it ought not to have been, and it was a deadly blow to the general's self-confidence. Only the fact that he was badly shaken in moral explains his subsequent conduct. He had three cards to play: his own personal relations with the President which he viewed much too optimistically, the Reichstag, and the Reichswehr. His colleagues were lukewarm in their support of him, but

they were prepared to support him if he had the President's support. He proposed therefore to play the first card and secure full powers from the President.

Amid the intrigues came the results of the elections in Lippe. The tiny state had been literally flooded with National Socialist orators and canvassers, including the Leader himself and his principal lieutenants. Every street in Detmold, every country lane was covered with party emblems and party posters. Loud-speakers blared everywhere; every bit of propaganda technique was pressed into service, and the police were powerless to control the Storm Troop gangs in their work of bringing pressure to bear on the hapless electors. Unfortunately the election coincided with a series of scandals in the party, the most serious being the revolt of the decenter elements against the evil-living Nuernberg leader, Streicher—one of Hitler's intimates—a revolt marked by rioting and expulsion of the rebels from the party, the most interesting item for Lippe being the indignant retirement of the founder of the party in that state, who accused Hitler of Byzantinism and certain of his lieutenants of immoral living. The party, he declared, was full of bosses, bureaucrats, and men of slavish mentality. The bosses lived by blackmail, intrigue, slander, and mutual denunciation, and the victors were not the honourable and the capable but the unscrupulous and the lickspittles—a curious commentary on the great speech by the leader three days before when he declared that he had created a movement from which democracy had been eradicated from top to bottom and replaced by authority.

After a fortnight's intensive effort the results were a serious blow to Hitler. Only some two thousand five hundred more electors had voted than a few months ago and the Hitlerites failed to get an absolute majority. They increased their poll by 5 to 45 per cent at the expense of the Nationalists, but the Socialists had risen by 4 to 35 per cent at the expense of the Communists. The combined Nationalist-National Socialist poll had risen by only 1 per cent. Lippe was to be a mirror of the feeling in the nation; if the mirror was accurate Hitlerism was still in a minority and unlikely to be in anything else. The

only contented person in Germany was Papen who saw that the unsurmountable obstacle to a Hitlerite triumph was still in being. Lippe more than confirmed his own opinion that Hitlerism had reached its maximum. There would at least be no cause for National Socialist jubilation when the Reichstag met on January 31. But the Reichstag was not to meet again under the Schleicher regime. Things were moving too fast.

While the Landbund was desperately trying to consolidate its position, a Budget Commission of the Reichstag in the course of its examination of the public finances came to the sums voted under previous cabinets for the relief of distressed landed property in the East Elbian districts, and began to unearth one juicy piece of scandal after another. They were seized on with rapture by the representatives of the parliamentary system. The Minister of Agriculture dutifully did his best to suppress evidence and to avoid giving names, but it was evident from the temper of the commission that full revelation could not be longer delayed. When it was ascertained that the parties were going to demand a regular Reichstag commission of enquiry into the whole administration of the funds drastic action was clearly necessary or Schleicher's land settlement scheme would be supported by the nation, and under its pressure might well be turned into something very much more dangerous to the landed proprietors. Something genuinely serious now faced the Landbund; at all costs there must be no enquiry into a scandalous disuse of public moneys far exceeding in its scandalousness any of the "Jewish" scandals of the Republican parties. There was one remedy, Hitler, for with Hitler there would be no Reichstag and no opposition, and so no enquiry—if they got Hitler on their terms.

In the presidential palace the intrigues rose to their climax. "Schleicher must go," was dinned into the President's ear. He was a revolutionary, an expropriator, a would-be dictator, an unconstitutionalist, a Bolshevik. He was treating with the Left; he was intriguing with the parties; he proposed to be a traitor to his class and a traitor to the state; he intended to use the army—the army, of which the President was head—to remain in power. Hindenburg was gravely perplexed. It had been with Schleicher's

counsel that he had departed steadily from the old ways and pursued a presidential policy in the interests of the nation, and now it was Schleicher who apparently was bringing back the bad old days—a dangerous man as, even when he took his advice, he had always felt. He consulted Papen. That true comrade was bland but unhelpful. He reminded the President of the warning he had given when he himself was dismissed; he agreed Schleicher must go, for his position was anomalous and on the verge of being positively unconstitutional. He, Papen, had at least had the support of one party in the state; Schleicher apparently had none; the party press was eloquently against him from extreme Right to extreme Left; it was quite impossible that he would be able to construct a parliamentary majority. No one supported him except a handful of his cronies in the Reichswehr, a support which in itself was a bad thing, and which as commander-in-chief the President could hardly approve. He himself could not possibly accept the chancellorship again. He saw no other course than to come to an agreement with Hitler. Fortified by the interview of Cologne and the disaster at Lippe he was sure that an agreement could be come to with him. The Nationalists were willing to support him and a Right cabinet might arrange a parliamentary majority; at least it would have a very strong parliamentary basis. That would be much more constitutional than a military dictatorship or even than another Papen presidial cabinet. At the same time it would really be a presidial cabinet for it would be the President and not the parties nor the chancellor who would select its personnel. The unruly corporal would be well looked after by an overwhelming number of superior officers—including the highest officer of all, the President. He himself was quite prepared on these conditions to serve under Reichschancellor Hitler.

The old marshal, much bewildered, yet retaining that elementary common sense that so often baffles the ingenious and that had enabled him to win battles which cleverer men were on the point of losing, was not convinced. All this chopping and changing began to irritate him. Where did anyone stand? His very candid opinion of the National Socialist leaders had not changed; his

feelings about the parties had not changed; there must be some other alternative than a double recourse to Hitler and the evils of party government. He would agree that Schleicher must go for clearly he was striking at all the foundations of the state, but he was not prepared to admit that the only alternative was Hitler. Were there no Prussians in Germany?

The conspirators, who knew that only through Hitler could their position be saved, were considerably taken aback for they had not yet secured Hitler's adherence to the plan they suggested. They dared not risk a mistake now. Once again Papen got in touch with the Leader. But they need not have worried overmuch; Schleicher was rushing to his own destruction.

His interview with the President convinced the latter that the Schleicher policy had failed. The general went to it with considerable misgivings, realizing clearly enough the difficulties of his situation. He had failed to create a "national" front; his efforts had met with a serious check in the fall of Strasser. He had had no time to get the co-operation of the middle-class parties; all his negotiations were in an extremely tentative stage; he was at the moment faced ostensibly with universal opposition. In any endeavour to gain the President's support he would not be able to deny that, when he got it, he and the President would be temporarily, at least, against the nation. But if he could paint the situation black enough the President might see the necessity for strong action. He took the obvious line; the parties exhausted and incapable; the country on the verge of civil war; the Red menace; the National Socialist peril; the *fronde* of the landed proprietors; the subvention of anarchy by big business. It was all true, and it was equally true to add that, in a state of utter disintegration a strong man who will take a stand will act as a rallying-point for all those to whom disintegration spells disaster, and that is the overwhelming majority of the nation. It is not beyond probability that if the President and Schleicher had been able to unite, thus giving the general a breathing space to go on negotiating, then, in spite of all the opposition on the Right, the general might have been able to rally round him not merely solid elements of support, but that large mass of the timid, some of

whose votes had helped to swell Hitler's poll and the rest of whom were to stampede into National Socialism the moment it seemed to have secured a position that was likely to be permanent. What the mass of the people now wanted was only the certainty that there would be a government which would be permanent and would govern, and they were prepared to support anyone who was capable of providing it.

Having outlined the situation as he saw it he outlined his method of dealing with it. Let him meet the Reichstag and give the national representatives a chance to keep the government in power. If, however, they defeated the cabinet then he would require a mandate to dissolve the Reichstag and to the decreeing of a state of emergency which would imply a temporary presidential dictatorship with himself as executive. He did not believe that it would be more than very temporary. The feelers he had put out had been favourably received in many places; it was not necessary to assume as inevitable that the opposition to himself was so united as to make defeat of the cabinet certain on the first division; the decree of emergency might never be needed; his confidence in his own powers as a negotiator was still unshaken.

His policy was neither illogical nor inappropriate; it was indeed the obvious policy. A return to the old parliamentary coalition type of government was impossible for no one except Papen could ever have dreamed of the coalition that that wily conspirator was preparing; a fresh election would not alter the situation at all for the days when a great new party—even a true presidential party—was possible were past; after twelve months of a revolutionary situation had been allowed to pass without either of the extremist parties making the slightest attempt to stage the *coup d'état* that was the logical aim of their avowed policy, it was reasonable to suppose that cowardice or stupidity or a combination of both would continue to render them innocuous, and besides, at no time did those responsible for the maintenance of law or order ever for a moment really doubt their ability to scatter into bloody fragments either a Communist or a Hitlerite rising. Schleicher differed from them only in thinking that the time for shrinking to open fire on a "national" rising had passed. Any

rising would be opposed at once by the other extremist party and the armed forces of the state would have the hearty co-operation of all property owners and men of goodwill in suppressing both. If the worst came to the worst the choice was between a mild military dictatorship—for that was what a presidential dictatorship meant—now, or a much less mild dictatorship after a nasty period of bloodshed and destruction.

Schleicher's plan was to eliminate the period of bloodshed; he took it as axiomatic that an uncontrolled National Socialist dictatorship was as undesirable as a Communist one so far had the apostle of Right unity travelled; what he did not foresee was the possibility of that controlled one which was being busily prepared. He did not anticipate any trouble. If there was he relied on public opinion and on the Reichswehr; it is certain that before he went to the palace he had the definite promise of support in any eventualities of the Reichswehr officers.

It was on the Reichswehr that his appeal to the President failed. The old marshal regarded that force as his special province; it was the bodyguard of the commonweal of Germany of which he was the visible symbol, and it must never be brought into politics until a definite danger was present which put that commonweal into definite jeopardy. To the President the general's plan was not merely to make the Reichswehr meddle with politics but to make it the basis of government, to set it against the nation, to commit the final outrage on the constitution. After all the special pleading of the Landbund and its allies, he could not accept Schleicher's view that the country would approve and rally to him. The horrible picture they had drawn of Schleicher's revolutionaryism came back to him. It was not from the nation that he hoped for support but from the Left and that showed how dangerous he was, for the Socialists were becoming less amenable, less respectful than the worthy Hermann Mueller; they were at long last remembering an ancient fighting revolutionary tradition. What a prospect! Reichswehr and Reichsbanner against the new nationalism, against the old, against the Prussian tradition with Russian Communism as a *tertius gaudens*! The old, old senseless vision.

The interview was brief and grew colder as it went on until in chilling phrases the President refused entirely to consent to Schleicher's plan; he would not even give him authority to dissolve the Reichstag in the event of a cabinet defeat. That was tantamount to dismissal and Schleicher knew that he had lost the game as far as the President was concerned.

This was the last crisis in the German Republic's history for the rest was just sequel, and once again the moment failed to find the man. The President's decision was at least arguable, but Schleicher simply submitted. He hesitated indeed for a day or two, but when he consulted his colleagues in the cabinet he was already a beaten man. He cannot have expected them to support him in any drastic action; they had the official mind and none of them was a statesman. If he hoped, from any encouragement from them, to make a stand he had mistaken his men. His present position was untenable. He had only three courses of action possible. He could meet the Reichstag and pursue his negotiations in the hope of creating a majority, but he would have to do so with the disapproval of the President and the inveterate hostility of the Right. He could resign. He could refuse to summon the Reichstag and threaten all malcontents with the intervention of the Reichswehr.

It is inconceivable that he had gone so far as he did go without the promise of support from his brother officers. It is said and with some authority that some of them urged him as a patriot to defy the President for the sake of the nation and accept the responsibility of governing Germany. With an appreciation of their countrymen which is uncanny in its accuracy they predicted there would be no real resistance and that the average citizen would heave a sigh of relief at certainty after uncertainty. The politicians would protest, but they would not protest overmuch. The Reichswehr had long ago ceased to believe in a Communist danger. The secret service agents had not succeeded with the best will in the world in discovering anything that even hinted at a serious "Red plot"; it was known that no real preparations of any kind had been made for a rising, and in any case a party that had grown steadily in voting strength and had let slip every

opportunity—some much more favourable than any that existed at present—for taking action, was not to be feared. For Hitler and his followers they had little more respect. The President would never appeal to undisciplined hordes against the Reichswehr and the undisciplined hordes would do nothing themselves. Hitler they felt could be trusted to play steadily for safety.

If it is true that Schleicher was seriously urged to risk a *coup d'état* those who urged him were probably right in their estimate of success. The spectacle of courage at last in Germany would have pricked the bubble of resistance more effectually than anything else. The *coup d'état* could not be prolonged, but it was perfectly possible for its originator to maintain himself for a considerable time. In these days excitement rose to a feverish pitch. Men felt that a decision was at hand and every sort of rumour filled the streets. The really anxious people were the Papen clique; the President appears to have taken a much shrewder view of the situation and not to have been at all alarmed. The Left parties relieved them of a very real anxiety by taking a completely orthodox party view of the situation. These had everything to gain from a *coup d'état*. If it took place it meant that Schleicher had definitely broken not with Conservatism, but with the Right parties who were being forced into union; in the succeeding period it would be on the Left and non-party opinion that he would have to rely. They had been unorthodox so long that their return to orthodoxy had no meaning; it was only that at the last hour they let traditional hatred of a uniform override every political consideration and deprive them of such an opportunity for striking a political bargain as had not presented itself for two years. Schleicher was not Papen; still less was he the Landbund and still less was he Hitler. A temporary arrangement was neither derogatory nor disadvantageous. But the Social Democrats would have none of him; their manifesto if more dignified was as uncompromisingly hostile as was the Communists'.

Yet Schleicher was really their last hope. When statesmanship in Germany was in a state of utter bankruptcy it was left to German democratic statesmanship to make the last fatal blunder and of two evils choose the greater. It never got the chance even

to make another blunder. Its supreme genius for capitulation failed it at the one moment when capitulation was both sensible and patriotic. While its leaders were fulminating to their own satisfaction Hitler was on his way to the presidential palace.

The declaration of the Left removed the real fear that was agitating Papen; Schleicher now could rely on no party in the state even for benevolent neutrality. Any *coup d'état* now must be a military *coup d'état* and a purely military *coup d'état* was almost unthinkable. The rumours grew more sinister. Papen once again appealed to Hitler now reduced to what was almost a state of panic, for he knew that he did not dare set his motley forces in array against the Reichswehr and to do him justice he did not want to. He made half-hearted efforts to take a stand with Papen, but Papen had no time to waste on finding formulae. The alternatives were plain. Either the military would rule and Hitler be retired again to Landshut with any other rebels or Hitler must rule—on the President's terms. The National Socialist leader thought again and accepted.

It only remained to convince the President. There was really no alternative for him. Rumour—perhaps malicious rumour, though not necessarily for there were men among the Reichswehr generals—had been carried to him that the Reichswehr garrison at Potsdam was standing to and that warning messages had been sent to the Reichswehr divisions throughout the country. An even more malicious rumour was circulated that Bavaria and the South German states were about to declare themselves independent. A march on Berlin and the disruption of the Reich! There was no one now to whom he could turn. On every hand, by every mouth—his son, Meissner, Papen, the Herrenklub, the Nationalists—Hitler was urged upon him as the leader, not of rebellious Storm Troopers but as head of a great national front. He would be nominally chancellor; actually, they said, he would be a hostage in a Nationalist cabinet for the good behaviour and loyalty of his followers. The President gave way.

But there was no *coup d'état*. After a long struggle with himself Schleicher tendered the resignation of himself and the cabinet.

Another strong man was added to the appalling list of those who were too proud, too patriotic, to fight.

There was a forty-hour interregnum while the nation awaited the issue with very visible anxiety. The parties, through their official organs, showered advice on the President. The trade-unions made themselves ridiculous by sending a manifesto asking the President to refuse to appoint a government which would be socially reactionary and hostile to labour. What other type of government had been appointed for two years; what other type of government could now be appointed? Everyone knew now that there was no other alternative but Hitler. The only question was on what terms; would he be appointed or would he take his courage in both hands as becomes a "leader" and appoint himself? There was a note of warning sounded at the great Socialist demonstration in Berlin the day after Schleicher resigned which declared that the democratic rights of the nation would be defended by every possible means, but it was powerless to influence the conspirators who knew perfectly just how feeble the means were.

On January 30 in the forenoon Hitler walked up the steps into the presidential palace. He found Hindenburg waiting to receive him—and once again Papen. The President was courteous, but unenthusiastic. He explained his view of the situation and his conviction that a presidial cabinet must have some solid basis in the nation. He did not indeed ask for a parliamentary majority though he hoped that one might ultimately be arranged. He therefore invited Hitler as the leader of the largest party to accept the chancellorship. But he must clearly understand that as the only responsible organ of government left in Germany the President could not admit that the cabinet should be a National Socialist one. The National Socialists had no majority—whether he stated that all the available evidence showed that they never would get one on a free vote we do not know—so that the cabinet must be a presidial one, though this time on the basis of a party coalition. Hitler, therefore, must regard his appointment as an independent, presidential act, and not as an endorsement by the president of a popular verdict or a party claim. In this decisive

act it must be distinctly understood that the initiative was Hindenburg's; neither Hitler's nor the nation's. The cabinet must have his approval for each individual choice, and he laid down to the new chancellor the bases of its composition which, owing to a surprise intervention of the wily Hugenberg, must now include official Nationalists much to Papen's and to Hitler's disgust. Well-schooled, the Leader humbly assented to all that was said; the famous picture which represents him accepting penitentially the handshake of a frowning, pedagogic President accurately depicts the situation.

This was the end of the famous march to power, of the conquest of the state. The head of the greatest party of Germany, controller of a great private army, chosen leader of the Third Reich renounced all his dreams and ate all his rhetoric. Up to the dark tower Childe Roland had ridden for two years; not alone, but surrounded by ever-growing legions, he had blown the horn of challenge to it, and when the great day came, instead of the grand assault, instead of banners waving bravely to the charge and Siegfried's sword flashing back the sun, he had trotted quietly round by the back and been admitted by the servants' entrance. Never was victory more meanly won. But he was chancellor and that, to the huckster that by long heredity he was, was all that mattered. That evening all Germany knew that the bricklayer's assistant sat in the seat of Bismarck; that was a symbol whose significance none could miss. Posterity could be trusted to suppress how he got there. As he humbly bowed to the presidential will, behind one of the last relics of the great Bismarckian day there stood in the background the real man of destiny who rubbed his hands in silent but profound content; Franz Freiherr von Papen had triumphed.

When the announcement flashed over Germany, the National Socialists, uncritical to the end, were beside themselves with delight, and quite, though uncomprehendingly, honestly; the bourgeois shrugged their shoulders and, reading the names of the cabinet, were reassured; the Socialists stiffened their ranks for a long political fight; the much dreaded "Reds," warned by torchlight processions and National Socialist threats, did nothing

at all save here and there go prudently into hiding; a few Jews lifted their all and crossed the frontier. But in the Herrenklub there was satisfaction.

And they had some right to satisfaction. Hitler had put up no better fight than Schleicher; he had not taken power against them like a conqueror, as he had threatened to do; he accepted it from them standing to attention, and from a gentleman standing to attention there is nothing to fear.

Of his real feelings when as chancellor, Hitler descended the steps of the presidential palace, there is no record. But he was no hero to feel the shame of it all. The intrigue was more after his heart than the battle, and the greatest of all intrigues was to come. To loyalty to the pledge he had given the President he attached no more importance than to loyalty either to his friends or his ideals; there is only one loyalty in the one-man party. There was no need to act now, much less believe in his own acting. This was the old game over again, the wily mean creeping to power. In 1926 he had made a beginning with a reconciliation and the road therefrom was strewn with the reconciled; he had begun another stage with a reconciliation in 1933 and the subsequent road would likewise be strewn with his victims. The subjugation of Papen and Hugenberg and Hindenburg would be a long but a congenial process at the end of which the one-man party would have become the one-man country.

He had only one fear—the party. Although the last twelve months had seen the final departure of the honest and the intelligent among his associates, he had still to make sure that the mass mistook the semblance for the reality. It was not altogether easy. There is to the crafty leader great advantage in having for followers enthusiasts who have refrained from training themselves to think. There is also a danger, for the enthusiast, almost impervious to doubt, is very receptive to impressions. Now for months the picture of “Hitler the Conqueror” had been so impressed upon them that it had become so real as to make it at least likely that the most blindly credulous would see some difference between the picture and the fact. At all costs the party must be kept from thinking. To the task of deluding the enthusiasts

once again, the whole propaganda genius of Josef Goebbels was turned; he was charged to supply the public with persistent evidence of the reality of conquest. Master of his craft, he left no method untouched; he began with a torchlight procession; he ended with arson, torture, and murder.

The night of January 30 was a night of fireworks, bonfires, processions. The Leader broadcast a special message:

The President of the German Reich has entrusted me, the leader of the National Socialist movement, with the chancellorship of the Reich. National associations and parties are united in a common struggle for the resurrection of Germany. For the honour before German history of taking part as leader in this work, I thank the generous resolve of the Field-Marshal and the loyalty and solidarity of you, my party comrades. To one fact alone we owe this victory, the fact that you followed me unfalteringly in dark days as in the days of success, and remained true even after the heaviest defeats. Gigantic is the task before us. We must accomplish it. We will accomplish it.

Minor leaders joined in the chorus passing from extravagance to extravagance, and the climax of a momentous day was reached in the capital in a gigantic torchlight procession through Berlin, through the Brandenburg Tor which had seen the Guards go through twice in victory and once in defeat, past the presidential palace at whose windows the President—a wonderful feat of endurance for a man who still limped a little from a wound got in 1866—stood hour after hour taking the salute and so to the chancellor's residence where at last they could greet the Leader standing solitary and triumphant at a darkened window. There were two symbolic acts that night. The murder during the procession, by his own comrades, of a Storm Troop leader who stressed Socialism rather than Nationalism, signified that the purification of the party had begun by gang law. The Leader hoped that all would mark and digest that. The other symbolism he hoped no one would notice; the twin heroes of the night stood in different houses with dark distance between.

They did not notice it; they did not even notice when they took the trouble to read the papers that "Hitler the conqueror"

had succeeded in getting only two members of the party into the cabinet beside himself. Yet it was in the composition of the cabinet that the capitulation to his old enemies was so obvious, his conversion to Strasser's defeatism so plain. It was only two or three days later that the more independent minds began to study the list a little anxiously, the list with the name of Hitler at its head. Vice-chancellor and therefore successor—Papen; finance—Schwerin Krosigk; Foreign Office—Neurath; economics and agriculture—Hugenberg; labour—Seldte; posts and transport—Eltz-Ruebenach; defence—General von Blomberg; five "barons," the Stahlhelm leader, the Nationalist leader! Where were the National Socialists, the victors, the greatest party in the state? Frick, never a popular figure and nearly expelled as a defeatist Strasserite only eight weeks before, was at the Home Office, and Goering, Hitler's pet, a minister without portfolio; in Prussia, Papen was still Reichscommissioner, a circumstance that made Goering's appointment as Prussian minister of the interior a dubious compliment, for everyone knew that the task of Papen was to render a Prussian ministry unnecessary. Every key position was filled by their enemies; they were in a worse case than if it had been a Harzburg cabinet. As they read name after name, and remembered the torrents of condemnation that Hitler had poured upon them individually and collectively, they grew more and more apprehensive. Where were the real men, the true men? Where were Roehm, Feder, Rosenberg, Epp, Goebbels, Esser, Hess, and the rest? That each found just satisfaction in the fact that none of the others had been chosen was naturally hidden from the obscure party man. Then they read that the list had been drawn up at Hitler's suggestion and apprehension vanished; the Leader knew what he was doing; he was a clever man and all was going according to plan.

As a matter of fact the reassuring statement had just one vestige of truth in it. Hitler had indeed formally proposed the list to the President, but he had first accepted it tamely from others. He had not even fought for his own lieutenants, not even fought for four seats instead of three. Frick had been Papen's suggestion; in that enthusiast's weird doings in Thuringia Papen had recog-

nized a kindred Christian-conservative spirit. Goering had had the honour of being a minister because he was not so obnoxious to the President as most of his colleagues—Roehm, for instance, of whose morals the President had already shown stern disapproval, Rosenberg whom he regarded as an atheist, and Feder whom he felt was really a Socialist. But Goering came of good family, and was regarded with paternal severity as a wild young man with a good war record whom responsibility might steady. Besides, in the weeks of intrigue he had been Hitler's envoy; he knew too much. If the vast majority of the National Socialist party troubled no more about it, there were among the best elements of the rank and file a considerable number who could but regard the new cabinet as betrayal not of individuals but of the cause and have never been able to forgive it. Among the betrayed individuals, despite the long discussions before Hitler's viewpoint was accepted, feeling rose dangerously high especially at the appointment of Goering who had latterly been the foremost advocate of no compromise and the forcible seizure of power. The position was ticklish, but once again it was the sort of ticklish position in which Hitler is at his best. Whatever doubt there was and still is of his ability to lead a nation there never has been any shadow of doubt of his ability to manage a gang. And once again he managed it. Besides, the situation was difficult enough for anyone to see that there was no time to quarrel over what should have been done.

There were two dominant considerations. None of the National Socialists believed in a real Red peril however much they have believed, like Hitler, in the myth of the Red peril. But it was quite clear that the Social Democrats were wakening at last to the realities of the position and the Socialists had what the Communists had not, a proper organization. It is true that the Reichsbanner, Iron Front and all, was not very efficient but its spirit was excellent; it was full of ex-service men and its efficiency could easily be increased. It was obviously chafing under the dead hand of the official leadership. Man for man it was a better if less well-trained and much less well-armed force than the Storm Troopers, and it might throw up among not a few able leaders

a leader who had made up his mind to lead. The comments of *Vorwaerts* were striking a new note of resolution. If this minority government was to survive unaided against the Reichstag and maintain itself in power after defeat it might have to fight. There were signs that the last and final forces would be called out against it—a general strike and the Red flag to the barricades. On a united National Socialist party would fall the main brunt of resistance; its allies, the party felt, were of very doubtful value. Wherever else the “barons” might be they would not be in the streets if bullets began to fly. This, the party realized very well, was no time to go over the old debatable ground again. The cabinet was not what they had hoped; it was a compromise cabinet and not a very creditable compromise at that. But it had all the possibilities of very radical transformation and then everybody would come into his own. To the argument that power was power and that they only had to use it there was really no reply.

A day or two cleared up the situation. On the Right everyone was pleased at the thought of having rather overreached his neighbour, particularly the Stahlhelm and Seldte. Relations with the National Socialists improved at once. On the Right there was unity, and with the Right stood Hindenburg and the Reichswehr; the officers would obey the President and the rank and file would obey the officers. Schleicher’s confidants had been pretty much confined to the War Office; of the junior ranks the majority were National Socialist in sympathy. The middle-class parties one did not need to consider. They had lost their adherents and though the doctrinaires could be trusted to give vent to plenty of criticism they would take no sterner action when the middle class and especially the working and unemployed middle class were so solidly behind the government. The Centrum’s attitude was doubtful. The party executive hated Papen and hated the National Socialists; the working-class element, especially in the great industrial areas, would possibly make common cause with their atheistical fellow-workers. But in the Centrum the powerful Conservative element would obey party discipline only up to a point. It would certainly never go into opposition and no Catholic, unless his political beliefs were very strong, could help but feel a certain

satisfaction when he saw in Protestant Germany a cabinet considerably "blackier" than any hitherto known. On the Centrum, too, the cleverness of Papen's combination had the desired effect. Outside the ranks of the Left no one, except a few clear thinkers—not all of them Jews—could bring himself to believe that this could be a cabinet of adventure; it was a "national," not to say a Nationalist, cabinet and it would be *ipso facto* a cabinet of order. In token of that faith all the prices rose on the Berlin Bourse; they would have staggered into fantastic panic at a National Socialist cabinet.

There was a pleasant air too about the moderateness of foreign comment. The distrust of Hitler was widespread; the foreigners had been more critically studious of his writings than his own countrymen; some of Germany's immediate neighbours took precautions. But a glance at the list of "barons," the sight of the name of Hugenberg, reassured everyone but the diehard anti-Germans and the Liberals and Socialists. Conservatism generally—and how many non-official conservatives are of the true conservative temper—reflected that a little discipline would do Germany no harm, that the responsible elements were in control, and that the great popular demagogue—the bogeyman of upholders of the peace settlement—had submitted to be tamed and guided. There had been no excitement. Everything had been done by constitutional methods, and after a certain ominous hesitancy German stocks showed firmness and a tendency to rise.

The country had hardly time to digest the fact that it was at last faced with a presidial cabinet of the united "national front" ere it was faced with yet another general election; the first act of the new government was to have the Reichstag dissolved. There was not the slightest pretence made that the election was going to be anything but a dirty one. The government was out for a majority and it was determined to get it by fair means or foul. It began quite arbitrarily by revising the electoral laws so as to prevent small parties putting up candidates; three and a half million votes which might be going a-begging was a temptation which could not be resisted. The reform itself, if not precisely in that form, was long overdue; the democratic politicians had

seen fit to wait until it was done for them with the deliberate intention of destroying democracy. As the campaign proceeded more things were violated than the electoral laws.

The day after the dissolution came Hitler's election manifesto—by wireless. It was at once characteristic and uncharacteristic of him. There was the customary exaggeration of language, the usual uncouthness of style, the same hysteria of delivery. But there was more content in it than usual and a noticeable moderation as compared with some of his unassisted efforts, a clever suggestion that responsibility had tempered rashness.

Fourteen years of Marxism have ruined Germany. One year of Bolshevism would destroy Germany. Even the misery of the last eighteen months would be as nothing compared to the utter woe of a Europe in whose heart the red flag of destruction was planted. . . . In these hours of overpowering anxiety regarding the future and existence of the nation, the veteran leader of the world war has summoned us, the men of the national parties and associations, to fight under him once again in the homeland in unity and loyalty as once we fought at the front for the salvation of the Reich. . . . The national government will solve the great work of reorganization of the economic life with two great Four Year Plans; the rescue of the German peasantry for the maintenance of our essential foodstuffs, and so the foundations of the life of the nation; rescue of the German workers by a powerful and comprehensive assault on unemployment. In fourteen years the November parties have ruined the German peasantry. In fourteen years they have created an army of unemployed. The national government will develop the following plans: within four years the German worker must be torn from his impoverishment. Within four years unemployment must be finally cured. With the fundamental task of restoring health to the economic life the government will add the restoration to health of the Reich, the states, and the communes from the point of view of administration and taxation. . . . The parties of Marxism and its competitors were given fourteen years to prove their capability. The result has been disaster. Now, German people, give us four years, and then deliver your verdict and judge us. True to the order of the Generalfeldmarshal we will begin. May Almighty God favour our work, maintain our will, hallow our understanding, and give us the boon of the confidence of our people. For we do not seek to fight for ourselves but for Germany.

Those who have studied the speeches of Freiherr von Papen will not have much difficulty in tracing the reviser of it. It was thin fare for the nation, which could have refuted its assertions and could not but doubt its promises. It was not the manifesto of a conqueror or a hero; it was the manifesto of a party boss who drew his phraseology from—Moscow.

The month that followed was a month of excitement and confusion. Apart altogether from the "illegalities" that succeeded one another in ever increasing rapidity the great issue was too plain now for even a democratic politician to misunderstand; there was plenty of loose talk, but there was more solid political thinking done in Germany in those four weeks than in the whole of the last three years. It was belated; it was not universal; but it conferred a certain dignity on the Republic's passing.

There were two practical issues, a major and a minor. The first was: would the government get a majority; and the second was: would the National Socialists get their 51 per cent. It was the latter that caused all the anxiety on the Right. Here once again Papen tried to play the honest broker. Here was the government of national concentration, but the national front refused obstinately to concentrate itself. Papen's idea was for the government parties to drop all their individual titles in favour of a single new title, or if that was impossible at least to fight as a great national *bloc* and not run separate lists. That would indicate that, as far as the government parties were concerned, the party system was at an end. If a "national *bloc*" got a majority the cabinet was safe; if there was no "national *bloc*" and the National Socialists got a majority it was all up with the cabinet, and the national concentration as well. Did he get a mere fraction over 50 per cent of the votes, Hitler would become the stoutest adherent in Germany of the party system; unless the President were prepared to fight, the only constitutional course would be a National Socialist cabinet and in Papen's view that would be a disaster both from the internal and the foreign political point of view; still more from the "national" point of view. He had been all over that dangerous ground before and he had reason to fear that he might have to go over it again for he could get

no unity. The National Socialists rudely refused to alter their name and the Nationalists, who had been ready to adopt a new common name, stoutly refused to be called National Socialists. All he could do was to produce Nationalist unity by inducing the factions to fight under one name in a *bloc*, which in meek imitation of the Communists they called the Black White Red Front, a name intended to awaken memories, and with its faint flavour of monarchism—and Prussian monarchism at that—of no small aid to the fight the Centrum was making in the particularist South. Papen himself campaigned for neither party. He was “national concentration” and he asked the voters simply to vote “national.” He was a neutral above the battle, but in an unneutral heart prayed hard that the popularity of Seldte would outweigh the unpopularity of Hugenberg and so enable the Nationalists to rob Hitler of an independent majority.

In the non-confessional centre there was a gaping void. Not a party remained, political party or interest party, except the Democratic party. Its strength had been reduced to two in November and it was not expected to survive March. The great Liberal party of Germany whose fractions had held one-fourth of the seats in the Constituent Assembly fourteen years ago had died of inanition. Its legions had gone over without their flags to the camps of its enemies, for the People’s party, the party of Stresemann, was now part of the Black White Red Front. There remained the Centrum, not intriguing this time, but aloof and apprehensive. It had begun by intriguing, by judicious enquiry on what terms “toleration” of the government could be arranged; its leader sent a questionnaire to the government. It was a questionnaire framed with all Kaas’s skill, but it was framed so skilfully that Hitler could not answer it. Instead he declared that it was clear that the Centrum would not support the proposal, that is vote in parliament for it, to send the Reichstag away for a year’s holiday while the government got on with its task. To that there was only one answer; no constitutional party could vote for such a proposal unless it knew what the government proposed to do during the holiday period. And that was precisely what Hitler could not tell it. No further attempt was made to intrigue; the

Centrum girded its loins to maintain its strength. That was all it could do. The official manifesto of the party spoke of a "final struggle" and called on its members to fight against "the Bolshevik corrosion" and "one-sided party rule"—a recommendation not calculated to illumine the perplexed. Had not the bishops fulminated against tyranny the Centrist appeal would have fallen very flat.

At the best it was a weak stay to democracy and the fight for freedom was left entirely to the Social Democrats. The Left generally, whether authoritarian or libertarian, was facing the crisis which it had steadily refused, despite all its rhetoric, to believe could come. From one point of view or another, whether on ideological grounds or as a result of the attempt to divine the future by ordinary commonsense rules of deduction, it had believed that the issue would be between Socialism of all brands and National Socialism; it would be a class issue certainly, but it was also an issue between government by many as opposed to the dictatorship of one. They thought of the coming crisis as an elaborated version of the Kapp "putsch," to which the answer would be a general strike. The Communists conceived of the general strike as ushering in the revolutionary moment; the Socialists as a single coercive action which would be successful. Beyond that neither had gone; with all the pathetic faith of the one in the Marxist logic of history, and of the other in the intelligence of Germany, with the multitude of warnings from nearly every country in Europe asked to be heard and pondered, with a voluminous literature on the danger of not taking "Fascism" seriously, they simply did not believe that Germany would accept Mussolinism. The presidial cabinets were a presidial device, a device that was not out of harmony with the national character and the national history, and if to the presidial system there succeeded a "putsch," they could deal with it as easily as they had dealt with Kapp or as the Munich police had dealt with Hitler. They had believed—and they were probably right—that a Hitler "putsch" would fail not because of the heroic resistance of the nation, but simply because at the first sign of resistance his followers would have been reduced to a mere handful just

as the following of the "putschists" had been reduced by desertion and circumspection in 1920 and 1923.

But now they were faced with something much more formidable: a concentration of all the conservative forces—a concentration of the other classes, not against the working class so much as demanding that the working class cease to consider itself a class, demanding uniformity, the united state, and defining it in terms of which at least half the content was derived from Socialist theory. The issue they knew instinctively was democracy or dictatorship, freedom or tyranny, but the Left could not place it as such before the nation. The time for that had long gone by. It had let the enemy define the issue and not all their special pleading now could change the definition to the definition which should have been made.

In answer to Hitler, *Vorwaerts* on February 3 published the manifesto of the Social Democracy which ended thus:

Against such a plan we summon you to the struggle. Defend yourselves, defend your independence as citizens against your oppressors, against the upper ten, against the miserable minority of the barons, against the capitalist; break their economic and political power! Fight with us for the expropriation of the landowner and the division of the land to the peasant and the agricultural labourer! Fight with us for the socialization of the heavy industries, for the construction of a Socialist-planned economy!

In these words are laid bare the fatal weaknesses which overtake a party of change which is also a party of eternal compromise. The leadership knew very well what the real basic issue was but they had not dared to define it. They had to fall back on old phrases and old catchwords which were full of challenge in the days when the Socialist party was the hope of all the workers and pressing on to power; they rang terribly hollow when one-third of the workers were pledged not to a legislative programme but in principle at least to revolution, and after the official party had been possessed of power for years without realizing socialism, and fourteen years before had on political and patriotic grounds deliberately rejected the Socialist revolution as unrealizable and

undesirable. It was all very well to oppose a Socialist-planned economy, bringing in once again the empty phrase of the charlatan, to the planned economies of Brüning or Papen neither of whom were fundamentally opposed to modified forms of state Socialism, but it was perfectly hopeless to oppose it as a battle-cry to "All power to the Storm Troops." The leadership may have honestly believed that that cry was meaningless. It was meaningless, of course, but it was no more meaningless than the cry "All power to the Soviets," which had carried Leninism to triumph, and only for lack of a Lenin had failed to carry to a similar victory the German revolutionaries of 1918. The simplicity of the Hitlerite definition of the issue—our revolution or yours—the declaration of war on "Marxism," threw the Left on the defensive; it had but one chance of victory and that was to pass to the offensive. It could not really oppose liberty to authority now. That issue was settled and could not be altered so long as physical force was an authoritarian concentrated in the hands of government. It only remained to oppose revolution to reaction. It was no longer a matter of theory against theory, programme against programme; it was a matter of physical conflict, a simple issue of physical life or death. Nothing was more certain than that power would go to the heads of the Storm Troops who from the intellectual point of view were as much doped and therefore irresponsible as cocaine-sniffing gunmen are from the physical; nothing was less certain than that their leaders could or would hold them back. There was every reason in the world to believe that, if power were gained, if the restraint of law were removed, then in Germany no less than anywhere else the code of the jungle would rule, though it is unfair to compare the clean kill of the brute with the sadism of which man is capable. The threat of the establishment of barbarism was the supreme justification for revolution.

There was only one policy of any use now and that was to prepare deliberately for armed action. It might not be necessary but it had to be prepared. The rank and file of the Left, except the conscientious objector, felt that instinctively. Those to whom liberty was not a philosophical term but a possession without

price, the intellectual as well as the unskilled labourer, the militant Marxist as well as the petty capitalist worker, the unemployed as well as the man in a safe position, the extreme Conservative as well as the extreme revolutionary, were ready. Within the working class, using the word in a wide sense, division disappeared. From every quarter, from the trade-union leadership which had treated with Schleicher and was ready to treat with Hitler-Papen, from the great industrial areas where Communism ruled where at the close of day Catholic unions turned Marxist, from the intelligentsia swelled by the many Liberals who now realized that German Liberalism had starved itself to death and that there was nothing left for the survivors but to go to the Left where Liberalism still preserved feeble influence over the thoughts of men, there came a stern call for action. Even official leaders who had held carefully aloof from such obnoxious things as workers' defence associations now appeared to incite them. But to what?

There was one essential preliminary and that was the united front. The new revolution and the old were one now in purpose; the foe was in front of them; only when it was crushed beyond hope of rally was there time for ideological difference; it was not a question of Socialist or Bolshevik planning; it was a question of stout barricades and straight shooting. And on the Left there were thousands upon thousands who had learned all about straight shooting in the great retreat, who had learned the art of the barricade in the Ruhr, and who for lack of rifles and lack of barricades had fought Polish machine-guns with clasp knives on the Annaberg. All they asked was a leader and the leadership could not supply one.

In both parties of the Left the official leadership had already given up the fight. The Socialist leadership was still under its old inhibitions; it did not want a Socialist revolution and it tried hard to avoid admitting the necessity for it by formal disbelief that the reaction would abuse its victory. It uttered vague threats of working-class vengeance, but persuaded itself that they need not materialize, for it knew that it had let all its opportunities slip. Ebert was long dead but his spirit lived and for that immor-

talities the German worker was going to pay in blood. Fourteen years of election success, of working-class progress, of definite legislative achievement had but been a steady loading of the dice against themselves. They had let initiative be filched from them; they had made no resistance to illegality, and now hardly anywhere in Germany was a Social Democrat in control of any function of government; everywhere a solid wall of enemies; armed police, armed Stahlhelm, and armed Storm Troopers conscious of crushing superiority were only waiting their chance to go into action. Against that display of force the more impressive now as representing the force of a hostile state, the workers stood unorganized and unprepared. By its own negligence the leadership had but unarmed mobs to fling against armed masses. It talked of a general strike, but a general strike is only a simple preliminary to further action and that must fail. The leadership was helpless and it knew it.

Already in many places Socialists and Communists—now that with the wind of disaster blowing over the latter the hooligan element had seen where victory probably lay and had donned brown shirts—were making common cause against outrageous maltreatment; all the elements of unity were present except the determination of the leadership to achieve it. The Social Democratic leadership did indeed make a half-hearted effort to carry it through, urged on by a demand so overwhelming that it could not but listen to it. There was power in the demand, but no time was given it to produce a leadership which would have forced unity on the titular leaders and deposed such of them as stood in the way. That was probably the only hope not perhaps of victory but of honour. Let the Socialist leadership none the less be given the credit for having seen the necessity. It had had to endure a good deal from Communism; there were many years of insult, abuse, and obstruction to be forgiven. But if the rank and file who had not had to suffer merely insult but violence could forgive, the leaders could not but be as generous. A real effort led by the intelligentsia was made to get the Communist leadership to come to an agreement; the official effort was not so hearty.

There was some excuse for officialdom for any effort was bound to have been shattered against the crass obstinacy of the clique in control on the extreme Left. Unlike its rank and file whose taste for ideological doping had been rudely cured by what was happening in the streets, it was in a state half of physical apprehension, half of excited satisfaction. Staunchly obedient to the treacherous instructions from Moscow, it saw the historic hour relentlessly approaching, the hour which its mentors assured them the prophet Marx had foreseen, the hour when capitalism driven to fight would be forced to a last stand behind privilege and would be hewn in pieces by the victorious assault of the working class. It entirely ignored what the prophet actually had said; it trusted the commentators who concealed the fact that the prophet had presupposed amid an infinity of conditions most of which were not present, a united and numerically superior working class. They wanted the Fascist dictatorship to be established; if it was not established, then something was radically wrong with the production of the drama of revolution. The fighting in front of it was just an opening skirmish; if in it the Socialists went down that was not a disaster; it was the *ipso facto* realization of working-class unity by the elimination of one-half of it. Then and only then when Fascism was entrenched in the state, the mass terror would begin, the oppressed rise in irresistible wrath, and amid scenes of appalling bloodshed the dictatorship of the proletariat would be established.

It is impossible to read the Communist literature and letters of the period without a shudder at the depths to which the refusal to use their intelligence independently can conduct intelligent men. While the liberties of the German working class were being destroyed one by one, when the destruction of the position of that working class was being planned and the complete suppression of the Communist party being most efficiently prepared, the leaders were still declaring that the real danger was a Fascist attack on the Soviet Union and calling upon the German worker to fight in its defence. Obscurantism had been fostered by years of careful nurture until it had reached a point where not a single Communist leader was capable of realizing that it had become

criminal. If ever any of them are in Fascist Germany tried for high treason and, the plea of feeble-mindedness being rejected, are executed, they will richly deserve their fate, though not for the reasons alleged by their persecutors. Their supreme crime is that there was one slender chance not of preserving the German democratic republic—that quite rightly was no concern of a proletarian anti-democratic party—but of carrying through that Socialist revolution which according to their own silly theories was the necessary prelude to the Bolshevik dictatorship, and that they refused to take it. They were the party of the future, and they were as negative and as defeatist as the Liberals and as impervious to wisdom and sense as Hermann Goering himself. Once the deed was done—and the appalling consequences to their own party and their own cause were so obvious that they could not be denied or even misrepresented—the official theorists blandly explained that the failure was due to ideological error which had induced a false view of forces outwith their control, that what they did do was right in itself, but failed of its purpose because the doers were not 100 per cent Leninists—a feeble excuse for what the realist Lenin would have damned as malignant stupidity.

And so the Left went down to its doom disunited and helpless. The rank and file of both parties defended themselves as best they could without any consolidating purpose behind natural resistance to outrage; in both parties the leaders wrung fatalistic hands, the Socialists as men powerless to avert tragedy, the Communists as men who saw in tragedy the first stage of victory. At the critical hour the leadership behaved in the good old German way; it abdicated, and in Germany the victor is he who postpones abdication a second later than his opponents.

There is always a case for abdication. The government would probably, with the superiority of force which it possessed, have fought. It was not suffering from the same inhibition of action that would produce civil war, for it could not admit, claiming as it did to be the nation, that war against the Left was civil war; it would be war against a foreign foe. If it fought well, it would win with ease. But even if the end be defeat, there is equally a case for putting things to the test and, if the test is

unsuccessful, for death rather than surrender. The workers were willing enough to make the test, but there is no room for hope in the hearts of men who know their leaders will not only not lead, but, as some of the trade union leaders were doing, are negotiating with the enemy.

Yet the situation was still not so desperate. The cabinet was not filled with that unity and confidence that distinguished the Storm Troops who appeared to have made a corner in national enthusiasm. In their ranks at any rate there was nothing but enthusiasm, hectic certainly, psychopathic possibly, which could have been restrained from violent expression only by a grim discipline which no one cared to exercise. In the absence of firm control the whole movement got out of hand, and its nominal leaders, so far from being shocked, looked on with complacency in spite of the protests of their colleagues in the cabinet.

The methods of the government to win the election were soon revealed; methods exaggerated by every National Socialist jack in or out of office. For publishing the Social Democratic manifesto *Vorwaerts* was suspended for three days; the Prussian question was settled by the dissolution of all representative bodies and the transfer of their powers to Papen. This affront to his dignity as Prussian minister of the interior roused Goering who now regarded himself as the hero of the revolution to fury, and from that day dates that enmity of his to Papen whose fatal consequences the latter so narrowly escaped in the holocaust sixteen months later. It was Goering now who took the lead in everything with such ferocity as to make many people believe that he was seriously trying to outbid Hitler for the leadership of the party. He usurped Papen's functions and governed Prussia as if it were his private estate; he usurped the functions of the Foreign Office and threatened with serious but obscure consequences those states who let their national press speak candidly of conditions in Germany; he cleared all "undesirable elements" out of the administration, including not merely Democrats, but Populists, and, still more, loyal members of the Black White Red Front, and even personal friends of Papen and his associates. Under cover of a draconian press decree issued by the cabinet, he

suppressed papers wildly and came into conflict with what was still a free judiciary, which on appeal quashed the suspensions nearly as fast as he issued them. Meantime the terror rose higher. Socialist meetings were broken up; Communism by sheer persecution was already being driven underground; the offices of Left papers were wrecked; the police were forbidden to interfere to protect life or property if the perpetrator of outrage were a National Socialist. A decent police chief at Eisleben, no politician, but imbued with the traditional German dislike of disorder, who tried to protect unarmed Communists from the fury of armed Storm Troopers, was dismissed, and a comment on the dismissal led to another suspension of *Vorwaerts*. As incidents multiplied and men of real prominence fell victims to hooliganism, the feeling in the nation hardened, and not a few Nationalists applauded the courageous act of the Archbishop of Freiburg who in condemning political murder really indicted the government. Goering replied on the one hand by legalizing the Stahlhelm and Storm Troopers, by making hundreds of them auxiliary armed police,* by expressly forbidding police to interfere with their actions, and by accepting bloodguilt for any consequences of his order to shoot at sight, precisely as the Jews he hated had accepted bloodguilt before Pilate, and on the other by the assertion that all the outrages were due to *agents provocateurs* who had donned brown shirts; barefaced mendacious effrontery could hardly go further. Exultantly he hounded on his legions, and his new auxiliary police shot down helpless Socialists in the open street. So far as Prussia was concerned, Nationalism and the presidial system might as well not have existed; it was a National Socialist state ruled by the typical National Socialist principles of cruelty and corruption. North of the Main the Swastika outflow every other flag.

The excesses had the inevitable result. To the painful surprise of its Nationalist members the cabinet grew unpopular.† A great Iron Front demonstration which even Goering had not dared to forbid, addressed by the party leader Otto Wels, showed un-

* It is curious to find Blomberg ten days later describing the Reichswehr as "the only armed force in Germany."

pleasantly the disciplined strength of the working-class movement; on even terms these men could have made short work of the Storm Troops. The united front loomed up as a coming event as the Communist leaders devoted themselves to mad schemes for mobilizing a non-existent army and distributing non-existent weapons, and as the Socialist leaders spoke out ever more clearly. There were many Communists among the thousands who answered with a fierce roar of approval the words of the old Speaker of the Reichstag, Paul Locbe, certainly no revolutionary: "Social Democracy will never again enter coalitions or make compromises; it will go all out to conquer power for itself." The Reichsbanner took as its motto: "Death rather than slavery." The tone of the Centrist and Liberal press grew ever sharper, and as outrages multiplied, as speaker after speaker for the government poured scorn on justice, order, and decency, as the campaign against liberty was carried even into the august silences of the Prussian Academy from which Heinrich Mann was compelled to resign for advocating the united Left front so that "relapse into barbarism" would be avoided, the temper of the outraged rose. The union of Roman Catholic associations issued a manifesto furiously repudiating the charge of treason against the republican politicians, and ended a bitter attack on the government with the words:

On the Right there are those who wage war on Marxism; on the Left there are the Marxists of two shades who are being driven into a dangerous alliance for common action. What will be the end? A life-and-death struggle, front against front, and Germany exposed to all the horror of civil war.

For printing this, Goering suspended the entire Catholic press—six hundred papers, including the vice-chancellor's own *Germania*—a suspension cancelled only after the ex-chancellor, the once "inevitable Marx," had humiliated himself to explain to Goering that the manifesto expressed anxiety for, not criticism of, the government. In Bavaria the Centrists with a particularist cause to serve were verbally at least of sterner stuff. The situation there was nearly as bad as in 1923 with the rôles rather upset. One

after another Bavarian politicians repudiated Hitler-Papen, and talked of separatism and a Wittelsbach restoration. Its premier, Held, went from strength to strength. On February 20 in Bamberg he was merely asserting that Bavaria would remain a free state within the Reich; next day in Rosenheim he was whipping an audience to enthusiasm by crying: "Germany is not Italy. In Bavaria we are ready for all possibilities. A second Hitler "putsch" will meet the fate of the first," and by the time he reached Munich on the 22nd he was declaring that Bavaria had to reckon with the possibility of armed attack and that she stood ready to repel it. In the little towns of Bavaria and the Palatinate Catholic youth fought Hitler youth; Storm Troopers broke up a Bruening meeting and seriously injured a dozen of the young men who formed his bodyguard; the worthy and ageing Stegerwald was dragged off the platform and beaten up with the police looking on. The Centrists of the Rhineland sent a strongly worded protest to Hindenburg. From all over the country, reports multiplied of meetings broken up, opponents maltreated, houses and offices burned down, outrages, rapes, assassinations.

The presidential clique took alarm; too many protests began to come in. The Reichswehr were grumbling and asking to be allowed to clean up the streets; property owners complained; the Foreign Office became hysterical over "unfavourable impressions." The Storm Troopers were heading twentieth-century Germany straight for another Magdeburg, and the saner Nationalists, even those who knew no history, feared the consequences. With growing apprehension Papen watched developments. Under the provocation offered decent people were being alienated, and his own secret service was bringing him steady evidence of growing disillusion and revulsion that was going to have its effect at the polls. Some reports came from circles so high up in his church and in political and business life that they could not be ignored and that stern disciplinarian, the President, was beginning to enquire rather testily if the government of order was or was not going to maintain it. The terror was threatening to send all his plans awry; it would either lead to an independent majority for the National Socialists or, what was worse, a decided defeat of the

national concentration front to obtain a majority. On January 25, the reports were clearer that the latter would happen; competent observers told him that National Socialism would lose another million votes which the Nationalists would not gain.

Papen appealed to Hitler who shrugged indifferent shoulders. Let swine be beaten up, and in any case they were only being beaten up by *agents provocateurs*. He was completely under Goering's influence at the moment, and was willing to let that faithful servant crash the party through to the power he had shrunk from seizing. But even he, and even Goering, had to realize that power depended on a majority, that the National Socialist "putsch," if it were not "legal" would be resisted by the state, and that they had committed folly in allowing the chances of a majority to drop steadily. There was a hasty consultation with his lieutenants; it was agreed that a great *coup* must be staged.

And now there comes that incident which may remain as one of the unsolved mysteries of history because of lack of documentary proof.* About ten p.m. on February 27 the news flashed through Berlin that the Reichstag building was on fire, and that a man who said he was a Communist had been arrested in the building on confession of arson. Goering lost no time. The flames had not yet died down ere the police descended on the leaders of Communism and all over Prussia they were haled to prison. The *Vorwaerts* building was occupied and evidence of Socialist complicity sought for, and early next day the President decreed a state of emergency suspending all those personal guarantees—liberty of speech and assembly, liberty of the press, inviolability of the home, inviolability of the posts and the like—contained in the constitution, and gave the central government authority to use force to compel any state to put the measures it ordered into force. This was a *coup d'état*; whatever the result of the election the government was safe.

But it was safe in any case. As if the fire had been a signal

* The recent publication of the Ernst document is not quite documentary proof. That the document is genuine I have no doubt; that it properly assigns the responsibility I believe. But it still requires corroboration.

every propaganda battery was turned on the Red peril. The country is in danger, was the cry. Represented as the official work of Communists and Socialists, stated definitely without a shadow of proof to have been intended as the tocsin for a general rising, the fire made the Red peril glow brighter in its flames. The doubters were convinced and the hesitating middle class stampeded into the National Socialist camp.

The fire has been already dealt with in a voluminous literature. It is sufficient here merely to ask the question which law admits to be a fair question, *Cui bono*? If there was one party in the state which, apart altogether from its deliberately adopted tactic of abstentionism, arson could not advantage, it was the Communist party. If there was one party to which it was advantageous, it was the National Socialist party many of whose members had recently undergone very practical training in arson. For three days everyone in Berlin knew that something was going to happen, and correspondents had hastily returned to their posts to be on the spot when it did happen. Most of them favoured the idea of a pretended plot to assassinate Hitler or Hindenburg. That would have been clever, but it was genius to make the red cock crow; in the ears of the bourgeois there is no more sinister sound. The apathetic alien degenerate—the Dutchman, van der Lubbe—was clearly a tool. Of whom? One thing is certain; he was not the tool of the Communist party. There is to-day hardly a single careful student of contemporary German history who would not put the blame where it belongs, on the little clique of desperadoes who were good enough to save the Leader from an electoral defeat that would have ended him, and who one by one have been removed by the action of their party comrades, and the great majority removed for ever. There is no need to believe the Leader knew of the details of the plot afoot till he saw the flames ascending; his pious ejaculation of gratitude to his God was no doubt sincere enough, for he was quick to see the possibilities. The same cannot be said of his lieutenants. The truth may be documentarily established some day; meantime there is a melancholy satisfaction in the reflection that there is at least one crime of which Hermann Goering, thrice decorated for valour by his emperor, twice

promoted for the reverse by himself, lacks the courage to confess himself even morally guilty.

The fire settled the issue. Not merely under the fear of a Red peril did the nation go to the polls, but under a terror that no civilized state had known since the Terror in France had raised terror to be an integral part of the system of government. The Communist press was completely suppressed; the whole Socialist press banned for a fortnight, and on both parties the wrath so often threatened descended. But for seven days at least it was an illegal terror, and although it was terribly effective by reason of its suddenness, its ubiquitousness, and its brutality, protests could be and were made, though resistance by force was now impossible. The unanimous disbelief of the foreigner in Goering's wild accusatory *communiqués*, the knowledge that the alleged documents discovered in the abandoned Communist headquarters were such clumsy forgeries that even the rough and ready Goering dared not publish them, the nature of the protests and appeals received made responsible politicians distinctly apprehensive. The Black White Red Front thought it necessary to tell the nation that it could trust Papen to control the wild men, a piece of information which must have gravely embarrassed even him, and Hindenburg, unable to disregard a protest from the whole Catholic episcopate, had to telegraph in answer that he personally would do all in his power to protect the freedom of the vote, and that he was confident the government also realized the necessity to do so. His effort may or may not have been feeble; it was certainly in vain. Nowhere did the forces of the state make any effort to defend the voter; in the great towns public opinion had to be regarded, and it would never do to make the result farcical there, but in the little towns and remote communes the method of controlling voters was that favoured by the Poles in Silesia on the brutality, illegality, and barbarism of which there exists a whole literature in Germany. The National Socialists are never ashamed to go to school and see merit in surpassing their masters. Yet in spite of the terror, in spite of the panic, in spite of the legitimate fears of the individual, the result was a triumph for the German democracy, an academic triumph indeed which meant

nothing, but displayed to the world an astonishing reserve of moral courage from which the republican regime had failed utterly to draw strength. Nearly 89 per cent of the electorate polled and the united Right just managed to scrape home with 51.8 per cent; without the terror that stripped Communism of a million votes they would not have got it. But the democratic parties did marvellously. The Socialist poll was down only by 70,000 from its poll in November; the Democrats polled only 200 less, and the Centrum were actually 200,000 up; the Bavarians, so much for Held's heroics, were 20,000 down. The anti-government parties, for at the moment the Centrum could so be reckoned, came within an ace of getting a majority. On the Right there was extreme dissatisfaction. Although the National Socialist poll had gone soaring up until it was 43.9 per cent of the whole, it was clear that if the Nationalists had not increased their poll, there would have been no majority. As it was, National Socialism, the party of "the Conqueror," depended for its legal life on the grace of Hugenberg, and even with him did not dispose of sufficient votes to enable the cabinet to pass unaided amendments to the constitution. But once again there was someone who was satisfied; the results had admirably suited Franz Freiherr von Papen; he was still the man of destiny.

The tragedy of the German Republic hurried on to its last scene. Into the details of events between the government's capture of a parliamentary majority and its use of it to put the dying republic out of its agony there is no need to go. The terror rose sharply and found its best advertised feature in a brutal anti-Semitism which together with the concentration camps is now as familiar to English readers as the dungeons of the Inquisition and the fiery stakes of Red Indians. Less familiar is the complete capitulation of parties and states, and the struggle which now began in the victorious majority—the putting into force of Hitler's favourite cuckoo policy—but that too belongs not to the history of the Republic but to the history of the Third Reich whose end is not yet.

The last detail to be arranged was the constitutional passage by the Reichstag summoned for March 16 of the decree con-

ferring absolute power on the government. The first step was to proclaim the Communist party illegal, and loose legal terror against it. The next step was to coerce the other two parties that might hold out, for, with all that pathetic faith on the gullibility of the innocent foreigner, the government wanted not merely the two-thirds constitutional majority now secure but a unanimous vote. With the Centrum, after prolonged bargaining, accommodation was reached; true to the principle of never being identified as an opposition party they agreed to vote for the enabling bill, a shameless surrender for which they were to be richly rewarded, though not in the manner on which they had agreed with Papen. But after the exclusion of the Communists and the compromise with the mammon of unrighteousness of that party which claims superior spirituality, there still remained the lonely figures of the Social Democrats. They had flinched many a time when there was less excuse; they had bowed before lesser storms; now, as they had done in 1918, they remembered only that they were Germans, the kin of the men and some of the men who made the great retreat. All was lost; their world in ruins; their comrades in prison and worse—in exile or making terms behind their backs; their followers cowed and beaten; yet there still was such a thing as German honour, and they were, against a brilliant galaxy of uniforms and talent, its last lone defenders. Every conceivable pressure, physical and moral, was brought to bear upon them to vote for the government or at least to abstain, a pressure kept up till the very moment of the vote.

The last parliament to which the name of free can with a tinge of propriety be applied, met in the Kroll Opera house in Potsdam, a symbolic spot. It was a curious and instructive spectacle. On the one side packed benches of the National Socialists, picturesque in state uniforms, uniforms of their own invention, or fresh laundered brown shirts; next to them the Nationalists, frock-coated, uniformed, a little doubtful, yet all exaltation; then the Centrists, dubious but cheerful after their bargain, amid whose sombre ranks the Democrats were unnoticed. Next to them the Social Democrats, some of the trade-union type, some of the intellectual type, pale and silent, and beyond that the empty space that might

have held the Communists. The seats of the cabinet in front on which appeared for the first time Dr. Josef Goebbels belatedly pitchforked into the government for reasons best known to himself as minister of propaganda, and above them all the broad smiling face of the Speaker, Hermann Goering. Above and around sat as many of the laity from princes to peasants as could get in; outside there stood an immense throng with Storm Troops here, there—everywhere.

The proceedings were brief. Amid a tumult of applause the chancellor went to the tribune to make his first Reichstag speech. Contrary to his usual practice he read it, a carefully prepared document in which the hand of the compiler-in-chief to the presidential party is plainly visible, a speech toned down at the last minute by urgent representations from the Foreign Office, a government manifesto, colourless, without rhetoric, except where the Leader, chafing at its limitations, let his eyes wander from the type-written pages. To another outburst of cheering which was answered by a still mightier outburst from outside, he went back to his seat.

There was a moment's pause and then the Speaker abruptly called on the Socialist leader. For a second a deathly silence filled the house, and outside came plainly the monotonous chanting of the Storm Troopers. "Give us the enabling bill; otherwise fire and murder." White to the lips, his mouth set in firm, hard lines, obviously feeling the importance, the weight, and the danger of the moment Otto Wels—let his name, despite all faults, be remembered—went slowly to the tribune. The head was slightly bowed, but the stocky figure was held rigidly straight, the shoulders squared as if facing a firing party. In an even monotone he delivered the party's decision. They could not vote for the bill; that would be to deny their past. The government might take their lives and their goods; it could not take their honour. As amid a pandemonium of cries he left the tribune, Hitler, to Papen's unconcealed dismay, sprang to his feet as white as Wels, but with rage. Choking over the words he demanded to be heard again. This time it was the authentic stuff and, as he spat out his hate of Marxism, the house rose again and again at him, and

when he sat down exhausted gave him a tribute to acting such as had rarely been given in that house. Then up to the tribune went Kaas, suave, prelatical, kindly, to declare that, reassured by this outburst, the Centrum would vote for the bill of which the Chancellor's speech was the justification, the Centrum which had defied Bismarck and beat him, and now crawled Catholic and universal before Hitler, a strange spectacle for the student of history and of men. Amid excited uproar the division was taken, to be hushed as the Speaker read the figures: for the government, 441; against, 91. To a man the Socialist members present had voted against the bill, a splendid gesture worthy of a long tradition—the student may recall that the Socialist party made its *début* with a gesture vain but fine; its last gesture was the same—and none the less splendid because the time for gestures of any kind had long since passed, a gesture of which the only sequel could be exile or prison. It was a useless gesture, but it was a necessary one. It was essential that, if the German Republic went down without fighting, it must not go down without protest. Not altogether unworthily did the Republic pass; that it passed at all worthily was due to the German worker; there was no one to speak for German Liberalism which had perhaps the proudest tradition of them all.

To the accompaniment of cat calls and threats of violence to the one section of the Reichstag which had not lost honour, the Speaker declared the Reichstag dissolved until it pleased the government to summon it again. The dictatorship was established in legal form; the German republic had ceased to be.

And in its place came horror, a horror that is still with us and has plunged Germany back into that savagery from which the Western world may yet live to regret she ever emerged—legal horror, cultural horror, artistic horror, moral horror, physical horror. It is easy over that horror to lose one's balance and concentrate on the spectacular rather than the important. The excesses of a half-educated, neurasthenic youth doped with rhetoric and fanaticized out of reach of conscience or decency are very horrible, but they are inevitable; they are only the victory of the subhuman and that victory anywhere will be characterized by

such phenomena. The greater horror is in the fact that to Germany, civilized Germany, which bears the moral and the legal responsibility, these subhuman exhibitionists are national heroes, permanent blasphemies on a glorious history. There is greater horror yet in the fact that the best blood of Germany, its President, its old nobility, its judiciary, stood by while the *canaille* ravened, reckless of the stigma attaching to such as stand by consenting to deeds of bestiality and cruelty, and that its officer corps watched it all with an indifference and a cynicism that not only lends verisimilitude to tales one had thought invention, but, in a land where duelling is now a legal means of avenging insult, might justify any gentleman in refusing to meet the wearer of a German uniform. And the greatest horror of all is that when freedom went down into bloody darkness, not one German, not one descendant of Arminius, was taken arms in hand and fighting, except a poor Jewish boy driven crazy by seeing his mother battered into unconsciousness before his eyes.

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ADDENDA

- Pp. 197 *sq.* Strength of the Communist party: the only figures at all reliable are those supplied by the Third International, and that body supplies contradictory ones. In PIATNITSKI's speech to the Xth Plenum of the E.K.K.I. paying members are given thus: 1929—May, 105,744; October, 98,527; November, 113,487; December, 135,160. In 1930, 143,000 new members joined, 95,399 left. In February 1931 the membership was 206,000.
- P. 355. I now learn on good authority that SCHOTTE was *not* shot.
- P. 424. Further details on Strasser's fall will be found in GOEBBELS' *My Part in Germany's Struggle* (London, 1935), and in *Weissbuch ueber die Erschiessungen, Juni 1930* (Paris, 1935). The former is characteristically mendacious; in the latter is a letter of STRASSER, which gives the interesting information (i) that only PAPEN succeeded in overcoming Hindenburg's "irrevocable" opposition to Hitler, and (ii) that SCHLEICHER intended to include trade union representatives in the proposed SCHLEICHER-STRASSER cabinet.



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